

Monster Girl Doctor (Light Novel) Vol. 5

Yoshino Origuchi

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BY YOSHINO ORIGUCHI
ILLUSTRATED BY Z-TON

MONSTER GIRL DOCTOR

5

Table of Contents

[Color Gallery](#)

[Table of Contents Page](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyrights and Credits](#)

[Prologue: A Letter to My Brother](#)

[Case 01: The Alraune of the Entertainment District](#)

[Case 02: A Sister with Demonitis](#)

[Case 03: The Arachne with Mourning Silk Syndrome](#)

[Case 04: Lindworm Asleep](#)

[Interlude: Brother in the East](#)

[Epilogue: Baby Sister's Secret Orders](#)

[Afterword](#)

[About the Author and Illustrator](#)

[Newsletter](#)

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CONTENTS

<i>A Letter to My Brother</i>	PROLOGUE
<i>The Alraune of the Entertainment District</i>	CASE 01
<i>A Sister with Demonitis</i>	CASE 02
<i>The Arachne with Mourning Silk Syndrome</i>	CASE 03
<i>Lindworm Asleep</i>	CASE 04
<i>Brother in the East</i>	INTERLUDE
<i>Baby Sister's Secret Orders</i>	EPILOGUE

Afterword

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VOLUME

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STORY BY

Yoshino Origuchi

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Z-ton



Seven Seas Entertainment

MONSTER MUSUME NO OISHASAN VOLUME 5

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Prologue: A Letter to My Brother

Dear Guren Litbeit of Lindworm,

This is your older brother, Souen. I don't know how many letters I have sent you at this point. You clearly have no regard for your family, since you ignore letters, not only from me, but from our parents and little sister as well. You haven't replied once.

For this, I am eternally grateful.

As father's successor, I hated how you were always in my way. But as long as you have no interest in an inheritance dispute, and you keep playing doctor in Lindworm, that's one less thing I have to worry about. Please continue to stay out of my way, and don't even think about coming back here.

I suppose I should get to the real reason for this letter. What I am about to write is important, which is why I used harpy express delivery. I must insist that you read what follows very carefully, and do as I say.

Our little sister, Suiiu, is on her way to Lindworm. Although she is still young, she was working as a guard for the senate. However, she fell ill about six months ago, and was relieved of her post. She left a note saying that she was going to Lindworm to look for work, perhaps because it would be difficult for her to find a job among humans at this point. Perhaps she's not even interested in visiting you, her brother.

I am sure this letter will reach Lindworm before Suiiu does. No matter how fast she might be, she can't beat sky travel. If she visits you, then there is nothing to worry about.

But if she doesn't, brother, go find her.

Mother is already worried sick waiting to hear from you. Now that our sister has run away to god knows where, I'm afraid that Mother will collapse. Father is also concerned.

So, Guren, find Suiiu and do what you can to help her. Take care of her. She is sick. As her brother, and a doctor, you must not ignore her symptoms.

Rumors of your work have reached us. I heard that you operated on the Draconess, who is infamous here in the east, too. She will be coming to the eastern capital to expand trade. You're probably not aware of this, but I took up a position as assistant to an elder

statesman. I am extremely busy preparing a warm welcome for the Draconess, which means I don't have time to worry about what Suiiu is up to. As her other older brother, you must take care of her.

That is all. I can't say it enough times: don't come back here, Guren.

P.S. Suiiu has a rare disease that is famous even in the human regions. It's probably not within your medical specialty, but examine her, if you can. If there is any chance that you can cure her, it would put Mother and Father's minds at ease.

The disease's name is Demonitis. Suiiu's body is human, but she is growing demonic horns. It is a chronic disease, and no one has ever cured it.

Don't scream when you see her.

Regards.

Case 01: The Alraune of the Entertainment District

It was approaching the peak of summer in Lindworm.

The weather was perfect, with clear skies. A bit of swimming and splashing in the water was more than enough to keep most residents cool. Except for the species which were especially sensitive to heat, everyone considered this the most comfortable weather in the region for the entire year.

The peak of summer was also a time when many merchants arrived from the east. This was because trade with that area had expanded. Of course, some trade took place in Lindworm, but traders also traveled through Lindworm, and then farther west. Skadi had worked hard to establish Lindworm as a central trade point between the east and west.

The market bustled with people and goods from the east. Around this time, almost a year after the slave trade mess, Glenn Litbeit, Lindworm's town doctor, received his brother's letter.

"Doctor, I found something."

By the time Sapphee came back, clutching rolled-up papers with the tip of her tail, it was already late evening.

"Suiu has actually changed the spelling of her name. There's someone named *Sioux*, in the common language—a new patrol team recruit. She's skilled with a sword."

"Oh, good. You found her?"

"Yes. Kunai looked into it for me before she headed east."

Glenn had received a letter from his brother. The letter, express-delivered by Illy, mentioned that Glenn's sister had contracted a rare disease, left the eastern capital, and headed to Lindworm. In other words, she had run away.

Glenn had immediately asked Sapphee to investigate whether Sioux had registered as a new resident.

"I'm sure the City Council was busy, but it was nice of them to check. I wonder if Skadi already left for the capital."

“Yes. She went with one of the escort groups. With all the trade expansion, the Draconess must be quite busy as well.”

Skadi, the Draconess, was using trade expansions as an excuse to meet with the eastern authorities. Of course, her bodyguard Kunai would be with her. Cthulhy, the Draconess’s attending physician, would join her as well—just in case. Lindworm would be without two of its leaders.

“I wonder how Sioux got here?”

“She probably walked. Many travelers and tourists are allowed into the city alone. Once the understaffed patrol team saw her skill, I bet they hired her on the spot.”

Glenn’s older brother, Souen, was the ultimate satirist. He had taken over the Litbeit trade business.

Then there was Glenn’s sister, Sioux, civilized and serious. She had all but mastered the military arts, although she hadn’t quite reached the top level.

“Doctor, you are really different from your brother and sister.”

“I know. I don’t have Souen’s business sense or Sioux’s strength. Sioux, in particular... Once she has a thought in her mind, she goes straight for it. She’s been like that since she was a child.”

Sapphee, who had lived in the Litbeit house as a hostage, knew Glenn’s siblings well. She had been especially close to Sioux. As soon as the letter from Glenn’s brother arrived, Sapphee ran straight to the City Council. She must have been very worried about Sioux.

“But after being relieved of her role as a guard, and coming out here to join the patrol team...”

“Judging by Kunai’s report, Sioux was assigned to the Radon Entertainment District.”

“The e-entertainment district?!” Glenn couldn’t help but shout. “Someone as young as her shouldn’t be there!”

“Doctor, have you ever visited the entertainment district?”

“I don’t have time for that,” Glenn answered honestly. Sapphee narrowed her eyes at him.

Lindworm’s prostitutes worked in the Radon Entertainment District. It was located on the town’s south side, its streets lined with brothels. Like a flower vase filled with colorful blooms, it attracted customers like bees gathering pollen.

“There are a lot of problems in the entertainment district. And the patrol team is all women.”

“I don’t know what to make of my sister working there.”

When it came to the sex industry, problems were inevitable. If the Radon Entertainment District wasn’t patrolled, it would become a hotbed of crime. Only licensed prostitutes worked in the district’s brothels, and the City Council strictly monitored operations, in hopes of preventing issues.

“Calm down, Doctor. It’s not as if Sioux became a prostitute.”

“Yes, but the entertainment district is under Aluloona’s jurisdiction, right? I hear she’s a stickler for protecting her people’s personal information. I wonder if I’ll be able to see Sioux.”

Even if Glenn went through the patrol team, there was no guarantee they would know what he was talking about. The entertainment district was complex. Many women there had left terrible men. If a man came looking for a woman working in the district, it would definitely ring alarm bells. Radon protected the women who worked within it, many of whom had no choice but to turn to prostitution. That was Aluloona’s policy as well, since she had her eye on the City Council Representative role for the next term.

“Well... We do receive ingredients from Aluloona regularly, but she might not be receptive to a manhunt, as it were,” Sapphee said.

“I wish we could have talked to Skadi before she left.”

Skadi was the current City Council Representative, and Cthulhy was the hospital’s dean of medicine, as well as Glenn’s supporter. Both had departed from Lindworm. Even if there were no issues with city operations in their absence, the City Council was still intact under Aluloona’s leadership. Thus, no one in power would listen to Glenn’s personal requests.

Glenn wondered if Aluloona, whom he had never met, would even speak with him.

“Kunai is gone, too, right? I feel helpless.”

“There might be another way. I’ve never been to the entertainment district, either. But a friend of mine, who lives nearby, knows it well.”

“A friend? You don’t mean...”

Sapphee didn’t have a whole lot of friends.

“We might have to endure some elaborate scheme, but you don’t mind, right?”

“I don’t really have a choice, do I?”

“Nope.”

Glenn's sister was somewhere in Lindworm, and knew nothing about the city. Glenn didn't plan on telling her to go back to human territory, but he at least needed to locate her, so he could notify his parents. He didn't care what his condescending brother thought.

"Either way, keep in mind that we're going to the entertainment district to save Sioux. Don't make me jealous, Doctor."

"I-I know." How could he think about that while he was worried about his sister?

Sapphee put her hand to his cheek and sighed uneasily, as if she understood what he was thinking. She was also worried about Sioux, who was just as much her sister as his.

"All the women in the entertainment district are working girls. Strictly speaking, there are also apprentices and intermediaries. The point is, if an unknown woman enters the entertainment district, she's going to set off alarms. The prostitutes will think she's there to take work away from them."

"Uhh..."

"You have to wear something like this so you don't stand out. Got it?"

"I think these women already stand out," Glenn answered, looking straight ahead.

No matter which way he looked, he was surrounded by sex appeal. There was no place to rest his eyes.

"Doctor, you need to gawk more. Otherwise, you look suspicious."

"Wh-what is the point of this?"

"What? You got a problem with the dresses we're wearing?"

"No, it's not that..."

The guide taking them into the entertainment district was none other than Arahnia. Glenn hadn't realized the clothing designer lived so near the district. Her proposal for sneaking in was quite the elaborate scheme.

"If we don't look like prostitutes, we'll arouse suspicion. So, that means we have to pretend to be prostitutes," Sapphee explained. "Ugh. Doctor, get closer. Oooh, I can feel your body heat."

"You can't just look at Sapphee the whole time. I don't normally

allow walk-ins... But anything for you, Doc,” Arahnia added.

Sapphee wore black, and Arahnia’s sensational dress was a purple number covered with butterflies. Glenn didn’t know how the mysterious garment had been created, but the sheer fabric used throughout the piece made Arahnia look naked, even though it exposed nothing.

Sapphee and Arahnia were posing as prostitutes. Glenn, walking arm-in-arm with them, was their rich young customer.

Other entertainment district prostitutes wore dresses similar to Arahnia’s. They came in a variety of colors, but they all had the butterfly pattern in common, and the designs seemed uniform.

“The prostitutes’ clothes are ordered at Loose Silk Sewing. The outfits we’re wearing are exactly like the real thing.”

“B-but, Arahnia... It seems like you can see a lot through...”

“What a strange thing for a doctor to say. They have to show off *something*. They are prostitutes, after all.” Arahnia whispered in Glenn’s ear as she bent her leg.

Sapphee squeezed Glenn’s arm tighter, determined not to lose to the arachnid.

Glenn found it hard to move. It wasn’t a state he wanted to be seen in by anyone he knew. Luckily for him, the faces of those people coming and going were impossible to make out in the dark of the night. Plus, both the prostitutes and the customers buying their time made an effort to hide their true forms—probably to prevent rumors about them from spreading outside the district.

“Well, Doctor, now you’ve seen it. This is the flowerbed of the Radon Entertainment District. It’s Lindworm’s underground tourist spot.”

Living up to its name, the Radon Entertainment District boasted multicolored flowers blooming everywhere. A massive flowerbed at its center contained violets, petunias, peach blossoms, marigolds, and ivy. The massive red flowers were probably mandrakes, normally seen only in the monster regions.

“There are a lot of signs...”

“Well, it is an entertainment district, after all. The lantern light is hopeless. Watch your step.”

The lanterns were wrapped with colored paper and gave off pink, purple, or pale blue light. The colors were meant to have aphrodisiac effects.

Prostitutes watched from the brothel windows. One interesting aspect of the Radon Entertainment District was that the workers mostly showed only their faces. One might expect them to reveal their busts, but no. Some monsters flaunted other assets instead. The lamia displayed their tails, the scylla their tentacles, the harpies their wings, and so on.

“Customers who like what they see in the windows negotiate a price with the woman at the entrance. If they come to an agreement, they are allowed to enjoy a room at the inn,” Arahnia explained, even though they hadn’t come to hire a prostitute.

“Heh! Everyone is having a good time! They say customers come here from far away because you can hire prostitutes of just about any species. Did you know that, Doc?”

“I’ve heard.”

Lindworm was a melting pot of species, and its sex industry was no different. That made sense as a selling point. Customers from the continent came to fulfill their fetishes, and the prostitutes felt secure working in Radon, where they enjoyed protection. In that way, although it wasn’t advertised in any guidebook, Radon was an important aspect of Lindworm’s tourism.

“Don’t wander off, Doctor. You might be dragged into a brothel.”

“Hey, Sapphee, you’re pulling him too far that way! It must be hurting him!”

“If you think so, then you can let go, Arahnia. You’re so tall, it’s hard for him to walk.”

“I’m squatting down for him! Doctor, don’t be shy. You can come closer to me.”

The two monster girls were pulling Glenn’s arms in both directions. They certainly weren’t exerting their full strength, but given how short he was compared to them, their grips still hurt. Especially Arahnia’s; she was holding on with all four arms.

Glenn caught a glimpse of white wool out of the corner of his eye. “There’s a sheep.” He didn’t say it just to change the subject.

“Don’t touch it, Doctor.”

“I know.”

“I’ve heard there are a lot of them in the southern part of town. They must appear in the entertainment district, too.”

Although it looked like a sheep, this wasn’t an animal kept for its wool. The sheep that had started appearing in Lindworm were small

enough to fit in the palm of your hand. They didn't graze in grassy fields or live in flocks; they just wandered around.

Still, the City Council was adamant about ordering everyone to keep their hands off the sheep. Anyone who touched them fell into a deep sleep they couldn't wake up from.

"Is there still no solution for the sheep illness, Doctor?"

"Well, I'm trying to figure something out, but not many people are suffering from the Sheep Sleep. Also, it's not fatal. Even though they're unconscious, patients can still move on their own, and eat and drink. Finding a cure may take some time."

"But there's no question that the cause is the sheep?"

"I wonder if we could figure something out by catching one." Glenn looked at the pocket-sized sheep as if it was a lab specimen. He'd heard about the creatures, but this was his first time actually seeing one. The sheep darted out of sight with surprising agility.

"Don't worry, Doctor. If you catch the Sheep Sleep, I'll look after you."

"You're very aggressive today, Arahnia. What's wrong?"

"Wrong? Maybe these clothes make me feel more daring."

Although Arahnia had sewn the clothes, the prostitute costume definitely lent her a charm that was absent when she wore her kimono. She hadn't made any compromises just because this dress was a disguise. In fact, it seemed as if she'd worked even harder to make sure her figure was displayed beautifully.

Glenn wondered how much it would cost to reserve Arahnia or Sapphee, if they really were prostitutes. He was more than honored to be entwined in the arms of those two. Actually, he'd gone beyond honored, and now just felt awkward.

"Doctor. Come closer."

"H-hey!"

"Teehee! I get all tingly when we're this close. What do you say, Doc? We're already here. The entertainment district has rooms for rent. They say it's because even prostitutes need vacations, but since we're already excited, how about..."

"J-just wait a minute, Arahnia! Did you forget why we came here?"

"Why was it again?" Arahnia did seem to have forgotten.

"We have to talk to the patrol team! But, first, we need to speak with Aluloona."

“You asked me to get you in... I guess I didn’t think about anything beyond that.”

“What?! Are you serious?!” Sapphee exclaimed.

“You look just as happy to cuddle up to the doctor, Sapphee.”

“Well, I’d be happier if it were just the doctor and me—without you!”

Arahnia grinned, clearly taking pleasure in teasing Sapphee.

Glenn was starting to think that Arahnia had just wanted an excuse to wear a prostitute costume. Maybe they should have found someone else to help. No, if they didn’t have Arahnia, they would have been stopped at the entertainment district’s entrance. Disguising themselves wasn’t a bad idea, but...

Just then, a large shadow stopped the trio in their tracks.

They had to look up to see the shadow’s face. A female monster with red skin glared down at Glenn. The white horns protruding from her forehead, combined with her muscular form, left no doubt that she was an ogre. She wore the badge of an entertainment district patrol team captain on one arm.

“Do I spot a lover’s quarrel? No arguing is allowed in the entertainment district. Do I need to take you to the guardroom?”

“N-no, we—” Sapphee started. But she couldn’t tell the ogre that they were from the clinic. She stood there with her mouth hanging open, unable to think of anything to say.

“Save your excuses for Aluloona.”

Monsters and humans alike, all bearing patrol team badges, surrounded Glenn and the women. Glenn searched frantically for any sign of his sister among them, but she wasn’t there. She had to be somewhere in the entertainment district, though, didn’t she?

“What should we do, Dr. Glenn?” Sapphee whispered.

“Let’s just go with them.” Glenn thought this might be a good opportunity to see what kind of monster ruled this pleasure den.

The patrol team escorted them away, following the ogre’s commands. The fragrance of flowers was almost suffocating.

Aluloona Loona, an alraune, was second-in-command to Skadi on the City Council. Apparently, Aluloona originally sold real estate in the monster regions, and maintained massive assets. She had a wealth

of knowledge on agriculture and education, and was tasked with the production of foodstuffs in Lindworm. She took that opportunity to turn Aluloona Plantation into a large farm, further increasing her holdings.

Glenn had never actually seen her, however. At least, not until today.

“Aluloona, teach me origami.”

“Hmm? Well, you have to fold that into a bag first, then turn it over.”

“Alulooooona, I drew a picture. Look!”

“Wow, great job! Is this me? It’s so good!”

“Miss Alulooooona, someone’s here!”

“Huh?”

A massive, bulbous plant surrounded the children. Its vines wove all around them, folding origami and drawing pictures. The children were of different species; monsters and humans played alongside each other.

“Chief, we’ve brought intruders,” the ogre patrol captain said.

“Why are you interrupting me? I just started playing with these children from the orphanage.”

A flower bud sprouted from the plant’s tip. As the bud’s spiraling petals blossomed, a monster woman with green skin and an alraune’s flower-like characteristics appeared.

“Oh, I know you! Don’t be afraid,” she said, looking at Glenn. “Stand down, captain. These are not intruders. Children, go with the captain back to the orphanage.”

“Okay.”

“Bye bye, Aluloona!”

At Aluloona’s command, the children shuffled out of the room. The ogre patrol captain turned to look at Glenn, Sapphee, and Arahnia.

“The chief—Miss Aluloona—is the most charitable person in Lindworm. You watch yourselves. If anything happens to her, you’ll have to answer to me.”

“You’re too protective of this old lady. Now, off with you!” Aluloona waved her vines, shooing the ogre away and summoning a server with glasses of wine. “Now, what are a pharmacologist and a designer doing here together? I’m guessing that this was Arahnia’s

idea? I know you like to play dress-up, but you have no business wearing that costume if you're not a prostitute."

"We need to speak with you, Miss Aluloona, and we didn't think that we could just waltz in," Glenn explained.

"Hmmm. You're Cthulhy's cute apprentice?"

"Y-yes, I'm Glenn. Thank you for continuing to supply us with medicinal ingredients."

"I'm Aluloona. You don't need to act so scared. Sapphee knows me well enough." Aluloona chuckled. "I can take a minute to listen to whatever the clinic head has to say."

"I thought the patrol team would kick us out of the district before we even had a chance to talk to you." Sapphee wore a glum expression. She didn't like being laughed at.

"Well, that certainly was a possibility. Everyone is on edge because of the recent pranks."

"Pranks?"

"Some jerk has been stomping on the flowerbed. Didn't you notice what a mess it's become? The patrol team is frantically trying to find the culprit. That's why I'm in the guardroom, even though I'm terribly busy with Skadi's duties."

"But you have time to play with children."

"It's the only chance I have to slow down for a minute. The children are from my orphanage."

Aluloona rubbed her head. A pink flower bloomed on her left temple. Each time she touched it, something gold and sparkly fluttered from it: pollen. The pollen drifted toward Glenn, carrying a sweet fragrance.

"You never change. You just do whatever you want."

"Well, I won't be giving you any more wine, Sapphee."

"I-I was just kidding. I know how hard you work." Sapphee put on a fake smile, trying to get back on Aluloona's good side.

Sapphee was normally very serious, but she had a weakness for alcohol. Aluloona seemed to know that.

Aluloona was an alraune—a plant monster. She was basically a human born from a flower. The bottom of her body looked like a plant bulb, round and large. She could move, but not very far. Below the bulb, roots branched off. Above it, a large, green flower bloomed. Aluloona's true form was anchored there. She looked as if a massive flower's pistil had taken human form.

Since the alraune performed photosynthesis, Aluloona's skin was a deep green. She never wore clothes, but leaf-shaped organs covered her bust and private parts. The flower blooming on the left side of her head made it look as though Aluloona had stuck a gaudy hairpin there. Petals resembling hair covered her head. Her eyes, peeking through the blossoms, were large and black. Her eyeballs had obviously developed differently than those of a mammal.

Aluloona seemed to be in her early twenties. However, since alraune were a long-lived species, her looks were not a reliable indicator of her real age. She might appear a bit sluggish, but her expression was coquettish. Besides, her leaf-covered bust was voluptuous, and her waist was a slender hourglass. Setting aside Aluloona's old-fashioned way of speaking, her stunning, youthful body would entice anyone.

"Doctor?"

"Doc, don't fall under her spell!"

"Ah! Ow!" Sapphee and Arahnia pulled Glenn's arms in opposite directions. It was the first time that the two women seemed to agree with each other.

Glenn was surprised at himself. He'd been charmed by beautiful women before, but he'd never quite lost his breath like that. Normally, he only viewed monsters' bodies from a physician's perspective.

Aluloona took out a folding fan and started to flap it. Her flowers fluttered.

"So, what is it? What possessed you to dress like this?"

"Coming from someone completely naked." Sapphee rolled her eyes.

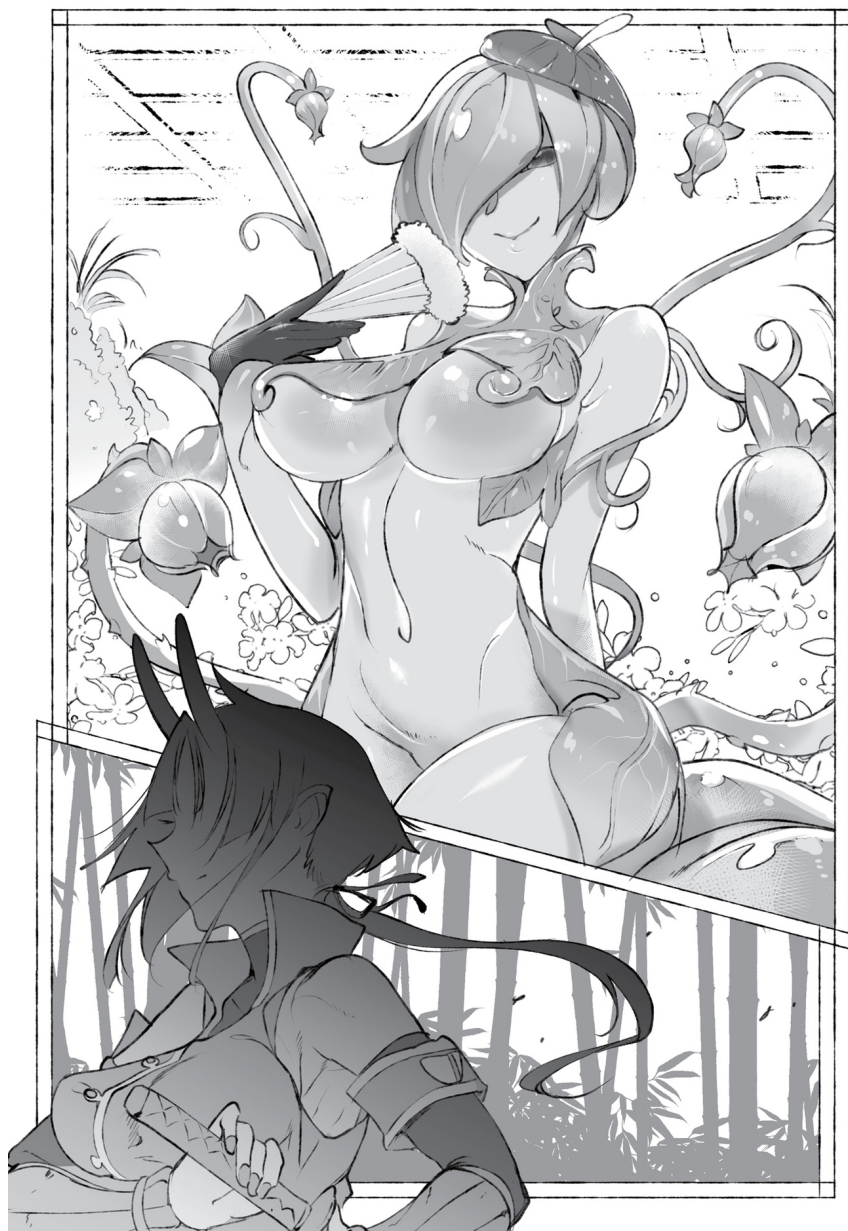
"Why would a flower wear clothes? We're already dressed up," Aluloona replied calmly.

"Well..." Glenn told Aluloona about his brother's letter, his sister running away, the information from Kunai, and the possibility that Sioux had joined the patrol team.

"Oh, I know Sioux."

"Really?!"

"Yes, she just started. Whenever I give her fruit, she eats so elegantly. So, she's a runaway, then? She did seem a bit suspicious." Aluloona didn't express any doubt about what Glenn told her. Whatever she'd heard about him from Cthulhy and Skadi must have been enough to earn her trust.



Aluloona clapped her hands. The ogre captain, apparently back from escorting the children home, entered. She and Aluloona whispered to each other for a moment.

“It seems that Sioux is out on patrol right now. She’ll be back soon. Why don’t you girls change while you’re waiting?”

“Oh, thank you.”

“Not at all. Families need to take care of each other. If, by chance, it’s not her, then that will be all.” Aluloona’s face was full of the love you’d expect from someone running an orphanage.

“If that’s all we have to discuss, then I would appreciate you taking off those clothes. The next room is free. You may use it.”

“Th-thank you.” Although Sapphee hadn’t said it outright, Glenn knew she must have been embarrassed to wear such a revealing outfit.

Sapphee hurried into the next room. Arahnia followed, leaving Aluloona and Glenn alone.

Glenn stood to leave. “I’ll just wait outsi—”

“Wait a minute.” Aluloona’s vines slithered, wrapping around him.

He was forced off-balance, but just as he was about to fall, more vines steadied him. Alraune could stretch and contract them individually, as if they were limbs.

“I wanted to talk to you about something else.”

“S-something else?”

The vines moved Glenn into a sitting position in front of Aluloona. She was only slightly taller than Glenn when he was standing. Of course, most of that height consisted of the bulb that made up her body’s lower half. From Glenn’s position, he had a clear view of Aluloona’s beautiful face and voluminous breasts.

“Something I can only ask the town doctor.”

“An examination?”

“I asked Cthulhy before, but she’s with Skadi now, on a business trip. As such, it makes sense to ask her apprentice instead, don’t you think? Don’t be afraid. It’s not like I’m contagious.”

Aluloona was probably too busy to visit the Central Hospital. It made sense that she would ask Glenn, who’d just happened to stop by, to take a look. He hadn’t been expecting such a request, but still, he couldn’t refuse.

“Okay, then. Well... What kind of examination did you have in

mind?"

Aluloona certainly didn't look as though she was sick.

None of her vibrant leaves appeared to be withering, and her skin's dark green luster meant that she was getting sufficient sunlight. When plant monsters fell sick, you could usually tell right away.

A bee buzzed around the flower on Aluloona's head, probably attracted to the pollen.

"Ugh. There are so many honeybees this summer. The apiary in the park has far more than usual, too."

"Wh-what?"

"I gave them free rein to pollinate, so naturally, all my flowers opened up completely." Aluloona held her breasts together with her hands. "I've got so much nectar now that my chest hurts. Please, help me."

Glenn could smell the thick, sweet scent that attracted the bees. The way Aluloona gestured and licked her lips, however, did not look like a sick patient.

The alraune species' nectar attracted insects and animals. The nectar developed naturally inside their bodies while their flowers were in full bloom. At first glance, an alraune's voluptuous breasts looked similar to a mammal's, but their only purpose was to make and store nectar.

"I'll get started."

"Yes, please."

The only way to get rid of excessive nectar was to expel it from the body.

There was no bed nearby, but Aluloona changed the angle of her lower body's petals to lie down. The alraune were known as "flower spirits," and they really were that beautiful. The pose naturally emphasized Aluloona's breasts, which seemed filled to bursting.

"Okay ... I'll start by covering you with a towel." Glenn figured that would absorb the nectar. Furthermore, even if this was a medical treatment, he wasn't about to touch Aluloona's bare breasts. In fact, that was the main reason he covered her.

"Now, I will open your pores."

"Y-yes, please." At the mention of pores, Aluloona's body tensed.

Alraune circulated their breasts' nectar throughout their bodies. They secreted nectar from their heads, the tips of their vines, and their blooming flowers. They were unlike humans, who fed their children breast milk directly from their nipples. If Glenn used a needle to stick Aluloona's chest where the nectar had accumulated, it would be expelled from every pore.

"I'm sorry." Glenn stuck a thin medical needle through the cloth, piercing her.

"Mmmm." Aluloona quivered in pain.

If Glenn had been more skilled, the procedure wouldn't have hurt. But perhaps fear, as well, made Aluloona tremble.

"Now your chest... I'm sorry."

"How can you work if you're shaking? You're not a virgin, are you?"

"Uh..."

"Listen to that reaction. Teehee! Did I strike a chord? Don't worry about it. Keep going." Aluloona smirked, watching Glenn's reaction.

Glenn had spent his entire adolescence studying, and then become a busy doctor. He hadn't had the opportunity to lose his virginity. It was true that he was often surrounded by beautiful women, including Sapphee, but that was different.

"Now... Again, I'm sorry." He touched Aluloona's voluptuous breasts.

They were different from human breasts, which contained mostly fat. Aluloona's were vibrant and firm, like oranges. Glenn started to rub them in a circular motion—gently, so as not to cause pain.

"Mmmm. O-oh, that's good..."

It started working right away. The liquid seeping out darkened the cloth covering Aluloona.

"I'm going to apply a bit more force."

"Ahhhh. Y-yes, please." Aluloona sighed seductively.

Glenn continued to rub her breasts. The scent of nectar was strong and sweet...intoxicating...suffocating, even. The alraune could seduce monsters and humans with their nectar if they wanted, although they normally only used insects and animals for pollination.

"Ahhh. Mmm. Ohhh. I thought you were just an apprentice, but...you..."

“You have a severe nectar build-up. When did it start hurting?”

“About three days ago... Ah-mmm.”

It kept coming out.

Alraune nectar was full of nutrients, and was said to be good for your complexion. Aluloona could easily sell her nectar if she wanted to.

“Ahhhh... Ohhhh...”

Secreting nectar from her pores was apparently very stimulating for Aluloona, who kept crying out. Her voice was so loud it made Glenn blush. When he remembered that they were in the heart of the entertainment district, that only made it worse.

“Does it hurt?”

“St-stop... No, m-more... More...” Aluloona wrapped her vines around Glenn’s wrists.

Well, she was the patient, after all. What could he do but oblige? Glenn stared vacantly into the distance. The treatment shouldn’t have had any effect on *him*, but he couldn’t focus his thoughts, as if he were under a love spell.

The smell is...pungent...

More nectar gushed out. The cloth he’d placed on Aluloona’s chest was soaked through. Glenn removed it and replaced it with a new one.

“Ahhmm.” Aluloona was enjoying herself.

Enjoying what, though? Glenn didn’t know, but he felt compelled to complete the treatment. He massaged her breasts harder. They still held a lot of tension—proof of just how much nectar they had amassed.

Glenn started to get dizzy. His body was hot, but why?

“Ahhhh... Ooooooh... Eeee... That’s good.”

“Aluloona, your voice...”

“N-nooo... I can’t help it... Ahh, that feels good. Ahhh.”

Pumping the nectar out clearly stimulated Aluloona, but why did it make her so flirtatious? If anyone outside was listening, they’d think this was a prostitute’s room.

If Glenn had been more focused, he might have noticed Aluloona’s exuberance. However, the nectar’s smell fogged his mind.

“Uh, ummm... Miss Aluloona...”

“Mmm... What’s wrong?”

“Th-this nectar...”

She giggled.

Aluloona’s shoulders shook from laughing. *She* was supposed to be the helpless one, but for some reason, Glenn was caught in *her* grasp.

“It’s nice, right? I’m quite proud of it. Flowers must have nectar. Do you know why?”

“Well, erm... Ummm...”

“It doesn’t do only to possess beauty. A good flower must have good looks, a good scent, *and* a good flavor. Appealing to the five senses is the proper way to be appreciated.”

Glenn was immersed in Aluloona’s smell. He felt as though she was eating him, starting with his head.

“So, you like this scent? Well then...” Aluloona slowly lifted the cloth covering her chest, beginning to expose herself.

Glenn knew he had to stop her, but he couldn’t take his eyes off Aluloona’s movements.

She was teasing him. Her delicate fingers, which held the cloth; her cleavage, which she slowly revealed; even her breath, which expressed excitement, all left Glenn speechless as the nectar’s scent engulfed him.

“Would you like to suck it directly?”

“Wh-what? No!”

“It’s fine! Rubbing and sucking are pretty much the same. If a venomous bee stung me, you would suck the poison out, right? This is a medical treatment.”

He wanted to point out the flaw in her logic, but Glenn couldn’t get make any sound except a low gurgling. Every time he tried to protest what Aluloona said, he lost the ability to speak.

“What is this? You have a woman begging you, and you do nothing?”

Aluloona’s voice could arouse men with only its sound. It was a lovable and sweet voice that made Glenn want to protect her. Her true intent shone out from the alluring eyes hiding behind her flower-petal bangs. Where was the richest landowner in town? Where was the passionate philanthropist? She was acting like a woman of pleasure. It went against everything he’d heard about her.

The nectar's scent traveled from Glenn's nose to his brain, making his movements sluggish. Aluloona took Glenn's hands, guiding him to remove the cloth that was already about to fall off her, and with it, any sense of reason he retained.

"Ah... Umph..."

The situation had strayed from any semblance of medical treatment.

Aluloona was pulling Glenn in, as if he were the bee and she the flower. Even though he knew that giving in would cross a line a doctor should never cross, Aluloona's nectar had completely taken over his feelings.

He wanted to suck her nectar, to taste it. *It must be delectable.*

"Ooooh, ohhh... This..."

Glenn tried to keep himself from peeling away the cloth, but he had no strength left. He buried himself awkwardly in Aluloona's breasts, nestling against her.

"Teehee! I've never fed someone from my teat before, but every man acts like a babe when he's against a woman's chest. There, there. Drink as much as you'd like."

"Miss Aluloona... Why?"

"Oh my. Can you still speak?" Aluloona seemed surprised. "Why, you ask? You didn't hear about me from Sapphee? I see. She probably didn't want to talk about the real me. Well, that's not a problem."

"Wh-what do you mean?"

"Think about it. I run a farm, and I created the entertainment district. I like children, it's true. Of course, I also like the act of *creating* children."

Glenn was buried in her breasts. The endless flow of nectar had soaked through the terrycloth and now dampened his face. It had a sweet smell. Not sticky-sweet, like honey. No, the rich scent was smooth and thick, and there was nothing vulgar about it. Just one lick made all the color in the world brighter.

"What I like most of all is mating."

"Th... I... Nnng?"

"Mating. Pollination. Copulation. Sex. Intercourse. Call it whatever you like. You do know that the alraune can mate with both plants and animals, don't you?"

"Yes..."

Alraune had strange reproductive capabilities. They could mate with plants through pollination. They could mate with animals through fertilization, like humans. They could mate with a host of different species, and produce offspring far removed from anything covered by common biological studies.

“It’s nice to look, but when my flowers bloom, all I can think about is joining with a man. I’m so glad you came to see me, Dr. Glenn. I just love young men...like you.” Aluloona licked her lips.

It was far too late for Glenn. His free will had already melted in the sweet nectar. It was clear now why Cthulhy had been in charge of Aluloona’s treatment up to this point. Glenn was unable to resist her seduction.

“I should warn you, it’s impossible to escape the lure of my nectar with willpower alone. Nectar has...aphrodisiac effects. Now, just relax.”

“Uh... Ugh...”

It wouldn’t be *wrong* to succumb to Aluloona’s temptation. After all, it was Glenn’s business who he chose to have relations with. Resisting would be harder than any consequences he might suffer as town doctor. But...

“Ummm...”

“Hmm? What is it? Are you finally ready to suck?”

“W-we’re in the middle of treatment. So...”

“Excuse me?”

“If I don’t become a great doctor, then Sapphee... She’ll be angry with me. So...” Those were the only words Glenn could muster. He’d resisted with all his might.

Aluloona just chuckled. She stroked Glenn’s head.

“Ahhh, is that so? I see. You’re totally devoted to Sapphee and Cthulhy. That’s okay with me. I won’t get mad if you say another woman’s name while we’re together. I actually enjoy it.”

“Uhh...”

“Would you prefer to include your friends? I don’t mind an orgy. There are two women changing next door. Why don’t you invite them in?”

“Stop right there!”

Glenn and Aluloona were suddenly pulled apart, as if a spring had expanded between them. Glenn’s mind was still foggy, but he could tell that Arahnia’s voice was echoing through the room.

“What is this about an orgy? Do you know how upset that kind of talk would make Sapphee?”

“Well, you certainly change quickly.”

“I’m here, too, Miss Aluloona.” Sapphee glared at Glenn. “There you are, Doctor. I had a feeling something like this might happen, so I brought you a stimulant.”

“Ugh... Er... Arg?!”

Sapphee forced Glenn to drink a thick, bitter medicine. He thought he might cough it up reflexively, but Sapphee pinched his nose and poured it down his throat.

“Ehh... Ugh...”

Once Glenn drank it all, the fog lifted, and he could think clearly again.

“Ugh... Thank you, Sapphee. You’re always prepared.”

“Of course I am. The moment we decided to visit Aluloona, I expected something like this to happen. She’s not a bad person... But when she sees a man, she seduces him.”

“I wish you had told me.”

“If I did, I thought you might seek her out.”

“I would never do that. That’s what you were worried about?!”

“I suppose you did just barely get my name out. You deserve credit for that.” Sapphee hugged Glenn from behind and stroked his head, as if mimicking what Aluloona had done only moments before. He wondered if Sapphee felt jealous.

Both Arahnia and Sapphee had changed into their normal clothes. It apparently hadn’t taken them long to change, and they’d just been waiting for the right time to jump in.

“Arahnia...”

“Yeah, I’ve already started.”

“Who do you think you’re speaking to?! I still have power!” Aluloona was throwing a tantrum.

However, she was completely caught in Arahnia’s spiderweb. Even her vines, which she could freely stretch and contract, were held firm. The web held both Aluloona’s arms above her head, keeping her from moving even a finger. Glenn wondered whether it was just his imagination that the web bound her in a way that accentuated her breasts.

“Well then, Miss Aluloona. How should we wrap this up?”

“Wh-what?! You can’t keep me from playing with men. I will have the men of Lindworm!”

“Well, I do understand your strong desires, Miss Aluloona.”

“S-so, are you mad that I put my hands on the young lord?”

“I’ll report it to Cthulhy, but I don’t really care.”

“Hmph. Then what?” Aluloona cocked her head to one side. Sapphee smiled, but her eyes were stern.

“You were in the middle of a treatment, correct?”

“What did you say?”

Sapphee approached the immobilized Aluloona. Arahnia moved closer as well.

“As you said, Miss Aluloona, you’re full of nectar, and the best thing to do is suck it out. Alraune nectar stimulates sexual excitement, so it isn’t appropriate for Dr. Glenn to treat you. I’ll do it.”

“W-wait just a second, Sapphee! No way!”

“Why not? I am a pharmacologist, and I am qualified to perform treatment.”

Glenn wondered what expression Sapphee had on her face. He sensed what was about to happen, and averted his eyes, staring into a corner instead.

“Y-you mean you’re going to suck on my breasts?”

“Since I’m here anyway, how about I help, too?” Arahnia suggested. “I hear that alraune nectar’s beauty and health effects are excellent.”

Glenn continued staring vacantly into the corner, entertained by the commotion behind him.

“J-just a minute! I certainly have a taste for women, but right now, I’m only interested in Glenn...”

“This is medical treatment. Now stop your yakking.”

“N-no! Glenn! Glenn, you do it!”

Glenn covered his ears, ignoring Aluloona’s complaints, but he couldn’t shut out everything. He still heard loud sucking sounds.

Sluuuuuuurp.

Sluuuuuuuuurp.

“Oh! Heh. It’s still gushing out.” Sapphee smacked her lips.

“Mmm. Leave some for me. Mmm... Ahh... Delicious.” Arahnia

did the same.

“Mmm. Ahhh... Both of you at once... Agh...”

The sweet smell wafted through the air again. Glenn knew that Sapphee and Arahnia were engrossed in their task, but he worried that smelling the nectar would put him in a stupor again.

“Slurrrrrp... Slillurp. Mmm... It’s sweet.”

“Teehee! It’s exactly what I imagined, Miss Aluloona. Slurrrp.”

“Y-you! Not so hard! Ahhh. Oooh!”

They were like butterflies devouring nectar. The only sound Glenn could hear was the two women sucking on Aluloona’s chest.

“Slurrrrrp. Smack. Slillurp.”

“Mmmm. Ahhhh...”

“Ahh! Ahhhh! Mmmm! I-I can’t take anymore! Arrghhh!”

“Slillurrrp!”

“Mmmm!”

All of a sudden, one voice grew much louder.

When Glenn timidly turned around, he saw Aluloona nestled into the flower that made up her bottom half, completely worn out. Sapphee wiped her mouth with a towel. Next to Sapphee, Arahnia had a nonchalant expression.



“We’re finished, Doctor.”

“Y-yes.”

Glenn turned back to Aluloona, well aware of the fact that he hadn’t helped at all. She might have been exhausted, but her eyes glistened as she gazed at Glenn. When their eyes met, Aluloona gave him a bewitching smile, as if to say she hadn’t had her fill.

Aluloona and Skadi were as different as day and night, but Glenn realized the one thing they had in common: he would never be a match for either of them.

Once the nectar extraction was complete, Aluloona laughed, as if nothing had happened. The nectar’s scent lingered, and both Sapphee and Arahnia’s skin glowed. They looked as if they’d molted. Glenn couldn’t hide his surprise at the nectar’s dramatic beautifying effects. However, he’d also just witnessed a darker side to the two women he thought he knew.

When the ogre patrol captain returned, she looked around the room quizzically. Perhaps she noticed the nectar’s sweet smell in the air. Perhaps she realized that something had happened in the room.

“Chief Aluloona, Sioux has returned. Shall I show her inside?”

“Oh, she’s here? Yes, bring her in.”

“Also, chief... Maybe you should cut back a bit on playing around.”

“I’m always serious.”

“I know that.”

The ogre was cool as a cucumber. She said nothing to Glenn and simply bowed to Aluloona.

“Sioux, come greet the chief.”

“Y-yes. Miss Aluloona, I am honored that you summoned me. My name is Sioux Litbeit, and... Aghh?!”

Sioux screamed as the ogre took a step back.

Since the ogre’s massive body hid Glenn, Sioux hadn’t noticed him until that point. He hadn’t looked directly at her, either, but her long black hair and overly polite demeanor were unmistakable.

Glenn hadn’t seen her in years, but there was no doubt in his mind.

“It’s been a while, Sioux.”

“Aaghhh!”

Sioux paled as she stood there, her mouth agape. However, that only lasted a moment. She quickly recovered from her shock and turned to run. She was even more agile than the last time Glenn saw her; she’d clearly been training.

“W-wait, Sioux!”

“B-Brother... No, I don’t think I know you. Sioux is not... I am a... There is no Sioux!”

“Wh-what are you talking about?”

Their brother had always said that Glenn had the brains and Sioux had the brawn. It wasn’t a very nice way to put it, but he was right. When Sioux was flustered, she became incoherent. She screamed out nonsense as she attempted to run away.

Glenn wanted to follow her, but couldn’t match her speed.

“Just a minute. It was I who summoned you,” said Aluloona.

Vines stretched out and caught Sioux by the leg. She fell flat on her face, mid-sprint.

“Ow!”

“You...aren’t very bright, are you?” Aluloona asked.

“She’s always been like that. She’s a wild boar,” said Sapphee.

“Do you mean she’s part orc?”

“No, she’s Dr. Glenn’s sister. Unfortunately, she’s just a human.”

Arahnia and Sapphee didn’t sugarcoat anything about Sioux. The worst part was that they were correct.

Sioux was still flapping around, trying to run despite being entangled in vines. Aluloona’s grip was too strong, though. It was said that alraune vines evolved like tentacles, to catch prey, but Glenn didn’t know if that was true.

“Ugh, er...”

Suddenly, there was a flash of light.

Sioux had drawn a dagger. No matter how strong Aluloona was, her vines weren’t immune to being cut. Sioux’s movements as she wielded the blade showed just how proficient she was with it.

“Heh,” Aluloona smirked. “Are you sure you want to face me with a weapon?”

“Uhh...”

“You can’t hurt me, no matter how many of my vines you cut. But you should think about what will happen to you afterward. Your superior is standing next to you. Do you think it’s wise to attack a member of the City Council that employs you?”

The ogre captain looked at Sioux, arms crossed. She seemed unconcerned, but she had started watching more carefully when Sioux pulled out the dagger.

Sioux sheathed her weapon, looking defeated, although she still struggled to free herself from the vines.

“Argh-mmm! You tricked me! Brother! Sister!”

“No one tricked anyone. We just asked Aluloona to call you. It’s been so long, Sioux. May I say you’re looking very well?”

“Argh...”

Glenn quickly examined his sister. She’d grown a bit since he left home, but it was undoubtedly Sioux. Her expression was just as serious and stubborn as always. However, two horns grew out of her forehead. They weren’t bone, like dragon horns. It was almost as if Sioux’s skull was deformed, bulging outward. The horns looked a lot like partially grown deer antlers, covered in velvet.

So...were those demon horns?

Demonitis. Glenn recalled the name of the disease from the letter.

There had been cases of humans transforming into demons in the east. This was beyond Glenn’s specialty as a monster doctor, though.

“So, where should we start, Sioux? First, why don’t we calm down?”

“Uhhh... Uh...”

“Sioux?”

She was acting strangely, her face turning red as she tried desperately to escape the vines. She was sweating heavily.

Is that smoke pouring off her? No... Steam?

It was subtle, but white mist rose from the tips of Sioux’s horns.

“Hmmm. This isn’t good.”

Aluloona released her vines’ hold. Glenn took Sioux in his arms, feeling how hot she was. There was no time to enjoy the reunion.

“Argh...” Sioux’s eyes weren’t focusing. They rolled back in her head.

“She’s losing consciousness. We need to work fast. Sapphee, help

me.”

“Y-yes.”

Glenn didn't know what was happening, but he guessed that it was probably caused by Sioux's Demonitis.

“If her body is hot, maybe it's heatstroke.”

“It's not that hot today. But I think we need to cool her, all the same. Miss Aluloona, could we borrow some well water?”

Glenn touched Sioux's forehead. Her horns were feverishly hot.

“Doctor...”

“It's okay. I can still work. Even if she is human...and my sister.”

Glenn slapped his face to focus. He had to do everything he could to keep Sioux from turning into a demon.

Case 02: A Sister with Demonitis

Sioux regained consciousness faster than anyone anticipated.

Cooling her body with a wet cloth seemed to do the trick. She explained that sometimes—during continuous—vigorous exercise, her body overheated, and she lost consciousness.

“My lords, my head hurts.”

“Is that something that started after your illness began, too?”

“Y-yes. Once the horns appeared, the fevers grew more frequent.”

Horns. And headaches accompanied by fever. Those were the Demonitis symptoms that Glenn had confirmed so far. He decided to take the now-awakened Sioux to his clinic. She could sleep in Sapphee’s room.

Sioux didn’t protest. She must have realized she would be found eventually. After all, she hadn’t even really disguised her name. On the other hand, maybe she simply hadn’t thought this far ahead.

For some time afterwards, Sioux stayed at the clinic at night, and worked with the entertainment district’s patrol team during the day.

Just like that, they gained another friend and roommate at the clinic.

“Brother, are you prepared for an outing?”

Sioux entered Glenn’s room without knocking.

Glenn had business at the workshop that day. Sioux wanted to get her beloved sword polished, so he planned to take her with him. However, he wasn’t pleased with her barging into his bedroom, even if they were siblings.

“Sioux, please knock before coming in.”

“Er... Western customs are so difficult.”

“Even in the east, you call out before opening the paper doors, don’t you?”

Sioux scratched her head.

Glenn pulled on his white coat and slung the medical bag he always carried over his shoulder. And, of course, he never left home without his dragon-scale amulet.

In contrast, Sioux wore her patrol team uniform. She insisted on wearing it every time she went outside. However, she had added gauntlets to suit her eastern style. She also wore a sword and dagger on her hip.

“Oh... Do you think my patrol team outfit is strange?”

“No, but the captain’s uniform was black and looked expensive. I just noticed that yours is very plain.”

“They say you can dye your clothes when you move up in the ranks. I want to dye mine vermilion.”

It sounded as though there were many rules.

And then there were the horns on Sioux’s head.

It wasn’t rare for monsters to have horns. Ogres, minotaurs, and dragons all did. But Sioux was human. The demons of the east had been similar to, but also different from, the ogres of the west. Moreover, the only demons to be found these days had once been human. In other words, they all suffered from Demonitis.

“What is wrong, Brother?”

“I was just thinking about how to cure Demonitis.”

“No need to get yourself worked up. There must be some way to cure it.” Sioux didn’t seem to be in a hurry.

Cosmetic surgery might remove the horns from her head. But was that really a treatment? Since they didn’t know the cause of Demonitis, it was hard to justify calling the mere removal of her deformity a “treatment.”

“Brother, hurry!”

“You seem very well, Sioux.”

“I have been unable to take care of my beloved sword since leaving the east. It was you, Brother, who said you would introduce me to a skilled professional.”

Sioux might have been sick, but she certainly wasn’t glum.

It sounded as though her work with the patrol team was going well, too. The freedom that Lindworm’s culture offered seemed to suit her. Glenn didn’t know much about Demonitis, but he could imagine how someone with horns might be treated in the east, where non-humans were discriminated against. That was the reason Sioux had been fired from her previous job.

“Brother, this is your clinic, correct? Are you even allowed to leave?”

“I have to go get some tools from the workshop. Sapphee will hold down the fort while I’m gone.”

“I see. Your wife assists you.”

“Not exactly...”

Sioux nodded, pleased with her observation, not even noticing Glenn’s reply.

At one time, the Litbeit household had kept Sapphee in their home as a hostage. Ever since then, Sioux had thought of Sapphee as a sister, and loved her as much as her two other siblings.

“Oh! We do not have time to sit here talking! I must arrive at the entertainment district on time to work the day shift. Quickly, Brother!”

“I know, I know.”

Glenn followed Sioux, noticing how quiet everything seemed. Ever since Sioux had arrived, the fairies had avoided her. Maybe they didn’t like how loud she was. Well, they’d probably come back out once they got used to her.

“Brother!”

His sister sure didn’t seem very sick. But the horns remained on her head, proof that she was, in fact, infirm. Perhaps she had no intention of healing her Demonitis. Glenn’s heart ached at the thought. He had to find a cure so that his sister could dream again.

“Let us order!” Sioux’s voice was far too loud.

They had just arrived at Kuklo Workshop, and she had already made herself right at home.

“I would like to get my sword polished.”

“That’s weird. It looks like no one is here.”

“Perhaps they were robbed!”

Sioux rattled her sword in its sheath. She was getting excited—a bit unprofessional for a patrol team soldier.

Normally, the workshop bustled with workers, who greeted customers immediately upon entering. However, today there were no cyclops to be seen, and the workshop was silent.

“First of all, thieves don’t enter workshops.”

“But, Brother, there are weapons and valuables here. You do not think someone threatened and stole the workers, do you?”

“Well, only strong cyclops work here. They may be mild-mannered, but they know the weapons they make better than anyone. And when it comes to protecting their products and workplace, they can get nasty.”

“Ohhh.” Sioux seemed to understand.

The cyclops’ strength was characteristic of giants. They were blacksmiths, so having the fruits of their labor stolen was a matter of life or death. They were formidable when it came to self-defense.

“O-oh. A customer...”

“I found a worker!”

“Eeeek?!”

A young female cyclops, likely an apprentice, came out to greet them. When Sioux addressed her, however, the girl yelped and hid.

“Sioux, keep your voice down.”

“Hmph. How rude. You keep criticizing—‘Sioux this’ and ‘Sioux that.’”

“Eeek! Th-the doctor brought a strange woman!”

The apprentice cyclops peering out from the shadows was none other than Memé Redon. She seemed wary of Sioux. Then again, she was normally shy, and often avoided eye contact.

“Wh-who are you? An ogre?”

“Oh, this is my sister Sioux. She’s just about your age, Memé. You two should be friends.”

“Sister?” Memé cocked her head to one side.

Glenn immediately regretted the introduction. Right then, Sioux’s horns made her look like a monster. Of course that would raise questions. How else could he explain their relationship, though?

“Your sister is an...ogre? Is she your stepsister?”

“It is not strange!”

Sioux stuck out her chest. Memé trembled.

“This town is full of lovers and couples of different species, is it not? So, there is nothing strange about my brother having a demon for a sister. I had heard that this sort of thing was accepted in this town!”

“Is it? Well... I guess it is...” Memé nodded, most likely to end

the conversation with Sioux, rather than because she'd had a change of heart.

Hurrying up their business seemed like the best course of action, for Memé's sake.

"Sioux. Didn't you have something to take care of?"

"Oh! Yes, I do! Please polish this!"

Sioux detached the long sword from her hip. The curved, one-sided blade had been forged in the human regions, and the guard and sheath were finely crafted.

"L-Let me take a look..."

Even though she was an apprentice, Memé was already a master of her craft. Once she laid eyes on the sword, her shy expression disappeared. She unsheathed the blade to check for chips and dirt.

"This is an eastern sword. We can't just use a whetstone... I-I think this will take some time. Is that all right?"

"That is acceptable. I am not in a hurry."

"O-okay then."

Memé tagged the sword and gave Sioux a receipt.

Glenn cocked his head. Usually, dozens of workers at Kuklo Workshop could handle swords. If the task was too hard for Memé, why didn't she leave it to a specialist?

Come to think of it—they hadn't seen *any* workers besides Memé so far.

"Memé, I came to pick up some tools I ordered from the master. Where is he?"

"H-he's sleeping."

"Sleeping?"

"It's the Sheep Sleep that's going around! What is happening to everyone?! The master, the elders, everyone is sleeping! That's why *I* have to do all the work! Why are you bringing in new tasks when I'm so busy?!" Memé sobbed.

She started hitting Glenn's chest. Her hands were big, and she was strong, so even though she wasn't exerting her full strength, it still hurt. Glenn let her take her anger out on him, however. She'd reminded him that he had to think about another rare disease besides Demonitis.

The palm-sized sheep appearing throughout the town were a mystery. Touching them put victims into a deep sleep they couldn't

awaken from. The patients didn't die, but seemed to be sleepwalking. They could still perform the bare minimum of tasks required to live, so Glenn had thought he didn't need to worry about the Sheep Sleep too much, but...

But a labor shortage was deeply concerning.

"Look! Look at this pile of tools! I have to repair all of these! And on top of that, this sword that I've never even seen before..."

"Yes. Well, we can always go to another workshop."

"I'll do it! I-I've learned how from the elders! You want me to do it, right?!"

"Should we go to another workshop? Yes or no?!"

Memé and Sioux's conversation was going nowhere.

It was kind of fun to watch.

Upon closer examination, though, Glenn realized that Memé's one large eye—twice as perceptive as a pair of human eyes—was bloodshot, with a dark circle underneath. She was clearly exhausted.

There wasn't enough research available on the small sheep that made you sleep. No one had died of the Sheep Sleep yet, so Glenn had put it on the back burner. He'd been more worried about Sioux.

I should have paid more attention.

He looked around at the deserted workshop and the exhausted Memé.

If the Sheep Sleep was spreading, it was only a matter of time before it affected the city's affairs. Perhaps there were already other places, besides Kuklo Workshop, where not enough people could work.

"Brother, there is something wrong with this girl, is there not?"

"Stop blurting things out without thinking, Sioux. You're intimidating Memé."

Saying whatever popped into her head was a bad habit of Sioux's. She probably wasn't thinking very carefully. In many ways, she was the opposite of Memé, who was twice as sensitive to subtle feelings as humans.

"D-Doctor, it's all your fault! Why aren't you treating this epidemic?! Get to work!" Evidently, Memé wasn't thinking through her words, either.

With Cthulhy gone from Lindworm, Glenn was the only doctor certified to treat monsters.

“You’re right. I’ll do what I can to cure the Sheep Sleep as quickly as possible. I know you’re very busy right now, but I appreciate your hard work.” Glenn patted Memé’s head.

“Oh, Brother! That is not fair! Pat Sioux, too!”

“Huh? Why?”

“I am working hard as well!”

“Okay, okay.”

Memé was like a little sister to him, and Sioux was his real sister. He patted both their heads at the same time, not quite sure how he had ended up in this position.

“Heh heh!”

Sioux looked up at him with a grin. He’d thought she’d grown, but she was still a child at heart. Or maybe she was acting immature because he was there.

“S-so, you’re really brother and sister?” Memé opened her big eye.

She stared at Sioux, as if she finally understood something.

“Sapphee.”

“Yes?”

“About this Central Hospital report...” Glenn had promised Memé that he would cure the Sheep Sleep. His days were packed. Between appointments, he read eastern folklore about Demonitis and studied Central Hospital results regarding Sheep Sleep.

He had to figure out the two illnesses simultaneously. Luckily for Glenn, he was a skilled reader. He liked to attain new knowledge.

Today was no exception. He was reading the Central Hospital report as he ate his lunch. He often ate while working. Today, lunch was a sandwich he could consume with one hand. He was taking in nutrients and information at the same time. Sapphee would tell him it was poor manners to eat and read, but Glenn was more concerned with efficiency than manners.

“Oh, the report that said they extracted the component causing the sleeping disease from the sheep in town? That document was cut off partway through, wasn’t it? I wonder why.”

Glenn was silent.

Sapphee's face looked grim.

She took the report from Glenn and ran her eyes over it, eating her lunch—a hard-boiled egg—in one bite.

“It's definitely incomplete. If I were to guess, I'd say the researcher caught the Sheep Sleep in the middle of creating the report.”

“I see.” Glenn held his head in his hands.

“What if you caught one, Doctor?”

“I tried, but...those little sheep are quick.”

“How unfortunate.” Sapphee had nothing encouraging to say in response.

The creatures causing the disease were called sheep, but they actually looked like two-dimensional drawings of the common farm animal. Or like moving balls of wool with legs and a head sticking out. Their true form was unknown, which made researching the disease they carried even harder.

“Sapphee, does any medicine completely prevent sleeping?”

“A medicine like that sounds like it would do more harm than good. Of course, if we knew the Sheep Sleep's *cause*, we might be able to counteract it,” Sapphee chuckled. “What do you have there, Doctor? Isn't it the same thing that's stuck in Kunai's neck? Eastern literature?”

“Scrolls. All the older texts are in this form. I wanted to research Demonitis.”

“Those don't look like medical documents. This is folklore, and oral literature... Wait, is this a family tree? Is this your family, Dr. Glenn?” Sapphee picked up one of the scrolls.

It was a record of every generation of Glenn's family. When he left home, his parents practically forced him to take it. He never thought he'd dust it off to look for a medical treatment, though.

“What is the family tree for?”

“Well, I was looking for information on Demonitis, but everything I found written was so strange. For example, one village reported the disease manifesting in ten-year cycles. In the neighboring village, though, there were no reports. It seems as though only one person per household contracts it. They're fine as children, but once they reach Sioux's age, the horns start to grow.”

“So, it's not infectious?”

“No. Nor could I find any disease in monsters that causes horns

to grow. Demonitis is specific to humans.”

“If it occurs periodically in certain regions...does that mean it’s genetic?”

“Well... I don’t know.” Glenn nodded vaguely. He’d pulled out his family tree to see if that might be the case. So far, however, he’d found nothing.

“Look, a name’s crossed off here...and here...and here.”

Names were blacked out all along the tree, no longer legible.

“Yeah. I don’t know if my ancestors did that, or if it was some other human who hated monsters. But it seems like someone wanted to erase Demonitis sufferers.”

“So many people in the east hate monsters.” Sapphee sighed with disgust, probably imagining how someone like Sioux could suddenly be cast out by people who, until that point, had been her family members, friends, and colleagues.

Did the people with blacked-out names all lose their jobs? Were they expelled from their homes? Were they told that they were no longer the same species as their loved ones?

Glenn’s disgust quickly crossed into anger.

It didn’t matter to him if Sioux grew horns, or wings, or even a tail. She was—and always would be—his sister. He believed that Souen and his parents felt the same.

“Looking at the legends, it seems as though the western ogres and eastern demons were different species. There are no more demons, though. Some people say they went extinct, others say that they were chased out of the eastern lands and joined the ogres, but no one is sure.”

“Either way, none live in the human regions.”

The only demons in the human regions these days were those who’d contracted Demonitis.

“That’s right. According to folklore, demons’ children have abnormal strength. They drink alcohol and even snack on humans, whereas ogres in the west are genetically similar to minotaurs.”

“But you never hear about humans or other species turning into ogres.”

“Strange, isn’t it? Occasionally, a woman, blind with jealousy, might turn into a serpent to kill her lover. But that only seems to happen in the east.”

“What? Transforming into a serpent from jealousy? Heh heh!”

Sapphee laughed for many reasons.

Such legends were common in the east. Living alongside a lamia known to have a deep relationship with jealousy, Glenn couldn't say that the concept was completely unfounded.

“Anyway, I tried to establish my own Demonitis hypothesis, but —”

The doorbell rang. A patient had arrived at the clinic. Sapphee jumped up to take care of them.

Glenn's short lunch break was over, too. He stood, eager to forget about rare diseases for a few minutes. He couldn't spend all of his time on the Sheep Sleep and Demonitis. Plenty of other patients in town were waiting to be seen.

Midsummer nights were lively.

The Giant Squid's Inn bustled with customers unwinding after work. The kraken madam was busy serving, using her tentacles to punch the rude drunks who tried to touch her. That was how it always was.

On this particular night, Saphentite was also drinking at the inn. She was a regular customer. Alcohol was an important part of her relaxation process after a long day at Litbeit Clinic. But it wasn't Tisalia or Arahnia joining her this evening.

“You have a healthy appetite, Sioux.”

“These dragon balls are superb! Nom nom nom.”

“Why don't you have a drink?”

“I have not yet tried alcohol...”

Sioux's glass held a clear, blue, jewel-like liqueur that wasn't available in the east. The kraken madam seemingly collected rare spirits from the mainland. Maybe, as trade expanded, she might import more Ginjo. Sapphee personally preferred wine, but she did want to try the eastern sake.

“Madam! One more!”

“How many have you had now?”

“No idea!”

Sioux seemed to prefer the inn's snacks.

Glenn was still at the clinic, researching diseases. He'd come up

with some new theories, but Sapphee hadn't heard them yet. He would tell her eventually, if he thought it necessary.

Today, Sapphee had invited Sioux to the Giant Squid's Inn after her patrol team shift. Sapphee was a heavy drinker, and whenever she wanted to get a story out of someone, she brought them here.

"It's been a while."

"Yes, it has. You look wonderful, Sister!"

"You sound exactly the same. You even still call me sister."

"I had to read a lot of old books during my education, and Father often took me to listen to lectures. I know I sound strange... But I cannot stop."

"It's unique. You don't need to stop."

Reading old storybooks and going to the theater were privileges Sioux had enjoyed while growing up in a rich family. Still, despite her parents' attempts to raise her to be refined, Sioux had become a skilled fighter.

"When I heard that you had Demonitis, I was surprised. But you look better than I expected. I'm glad."

"I feel great! I have an appetite, and I can move!" Sioux grinned from ear to ear. She might have been ill, but she wasn't fretting over it. She looked lively and happy to reside in Lindworm.

That was why Sapphee had invited her to the Giant Squid's Inn today.

Sioux had left home because of her Demonitis. Now she was a patrol team member in Lindworm's entertainment district. Something didn't add up, though, and Sapphee thought that talking over drinks might help her understand.

"But sometimes I get fevers," Sioux added. "Mmm."

"I'm sure your brother will find the cause. Come to think of it, I also got fevers back at Litbeit Manor."

"Brother always panicked, even though he was just a child!"

Sapphee had been a hostage in the Litbeit household. However, she'd enjoyed her life there, playing with Sioux, who was like a sister to her. It had been Sapphee's first time seeing humans, living among them. Litbeit Manor was also where she fell in love for the first time.

"Things are different now than when we were kids, Sioux. You were always very strong, but I didn't realize you had such a sense of justice. I'm surprised you joined the patrol team."

"I was surprised as well! Most of the patrol team members are ogres and minotaurs. But no one minds, as long as I have horns!" Sioux sipped her blue cocktail, looking off into the distance.

Sapphee wondered if Sioux was remembering her home.

"Souen is in business and politics. Glenn ignored our parents' objections and joined the monster academy. I... Well, it seems as though living by the sword suits me." Sioux blushed. "It is not the same as being a doctor, but in the end, I help people too."

"One of our regular patients commented on how well you're doing as a new recruit."

"Miss Aluloona often gives me treats. The captain of the entertainment district is also wonderful. I am happy."

It was strange. At a glance, Sioux seemed blessed, probably thanks to Lindworm's accepting culture. Sapphee had to keep reminding herself that Sioux came to Lindworm because of her illness.

But to say that she was happy... Who was she trying to convince?

"You're very positive, Sioux. You're like your brother in that way."

"Well, I still have a lot to learn. I may have changed into a demon, but I am having a hard time coming to terms with it. I'm still attached to being human."

"Attached?" That was an interesting choice of words.

Sioux seemed to have given up any hope of getting better. That made a certain sense, though, considering that no one with Demonitis had ever been cured.

"I would consider it normal to prefer a time when you were healthy," suggested Sapphee.

"There is no cure for Demonitis. In the east, people often told me that I was a demon, so my only choice was to live as a demon. That is why I made my way to Lindworm. Here, I thought they would have to accept my monstrous body."

Sioux downed the contents of her glass, the alcohol bursting the dam that had trapped her true feelings.

"You're still human. You're just sick."

"If there is no cure, then this is no different from actually transforming into a demon. Saying I want to go back to being human is rude to monsters, is it not?"

Sapphee examined Sioux's horns. They extended from her head,

but hadn't broken through the skin. Sapphee thought about what she would do if she had horns; she would probably look like some dragon subspecies. That couldn't happen, though.

"I want to remain as positive as possible. I have many things to do in Lindworm, so there is no time for idle thought... Sister?"

"Mfeh! Heh-ha!" Sapphee did everything she could to keep from spitting out her wine.

"S-Sister! Please do not laugh! I am serious."

"Serious, when you say that wanting to be human again makes it look as though you hate monsters? That's ludicrous."

"Uh..." Sioux's face was beet-red. "Do not laugh! I am thinking about everyone from the bottom of my heart!"

"I know. You're a sweet child. You are so far removed from monster discrimination that it's hard to believe you were born and raised in the east." Sapphee was still chuckling a bit.

There certainly was a connection between Sioux's sweet demeanor, her sensitivity to discrimination against monsters, and the fact that she'd spent so much time with Sapphee as a child.

"But don't misunderstand."

Sioux looked confused.

"There is no 'monster species.' There are lamia, and centaurs, and arachne, and a ton of others. The term 'monster' is convenient, but there are many species."

Sapphee thought of the women she sometimes joined for drinks here. Many tended to distinguish between monsters and humans. Still, it wasn't as if all monsters automatically got along. Harpies were instinctually wary of cyclops, and small beast species tended to fear lamia. Plenty of fights over seemingly trivial matters had broken out between monsters in Lindworm.

"But that's how monsters have always existed. Smaller groups slowly gathered together until we finally had equal status to the human majority in the east. It's not like we don't discriminate against anyone, and it's not like we don't hate anyone."

Sioux was silent.

"For example, if someone told me that I would become a centaur tomorrow, I would be very confused. I don't know how to walk on hooves, and I've never even used *legs* before. I am glad that I was born a lamia."

Of course, not everyone shared that sentiment. Some monsters

were proud of their species. Others felt insecure or even detached. Monsters held a variety of feelings about their origins. That was the point. No matter the species, each individual was different.

“It’s not fun to bundle each person into a category of just ‘monster’ or ‘human,’ is it?”

“Hmmm.”

“You are the same person, whether you grow horns, or wings, or anything else. It’s not as if you were suddenly reborn one day. You are, and always will be, Sioux.”

“Ahhh!” Sioux put her head in her hands and moaned.

It was easy to say that she should accept herself and others as they were. Putting it into practice was much harder, however.

“I don’t know!” Sioux exclaimed, then chugged her drink.

“You’re still young. You have time to learn.”

“I am no good at studying.” Maybe because she was drunk, Sioux put her elbows on the table and started playing with her horns.

“Sister, let us speak about something more fun.”

Sapphee drained her glass of white wine in one gulp. “Why did you come here, Sioux?”

“Like I told you before, I was relieved of my post as guard for the senate, and then...”

“Let me rephrase the question. Why didn’t you tell Dr. Glenn and me that you were here?”

“Um...” Sioux’s face was easy to read.

“It’s not good to lie.”

“I am not telling any lies...” Sioux’s lips quivered as she tried to hide her emotions. She wouldn’t make eye contact with Sapphee. It was clear why she preferred sword work.

Come to think of it, one of Sapphee’s friends, a centaur, was also a merchant’s daughter and had also become a warrior. Like Sioux, she was very frank, and it was easy to tell what she thought. She prided herself on her sense of fairness.

Sioux had a long way to go.

“You won’t tell me? Even though you call me sister?”

“I-It is not the same thing. If you want to play that game, why don’t you just hurry up and marry Brother?!”

“If it were possible, I already would’ve.”

Here Sapphee was, trying to talk about Sioux, and instead, Sioux brought up Sapphee's stagnant relationship with Glenn. Sapphee had warmed up a bit to the idea lately. Still, the truth was that Glenn had opened his clinic with Cthulhy's permission, and proceeding with any relationship would only make his teacher angry. Cthulhy was thrilled with her apprentice's growth, and seemed to appreciate how hard he worked. Even so, however, Glenn and Sapphee couldn't be hasty.

If Glenn didn't develop his skills further, there would be no discussion of love or marriage.

"Besides, the centaur princess or arachne thief might steal him out from under me. Molly does whatever she pleases; Skadi is worse. Even Lulala has her eye on Glenn. I'm just a girl who's been in love with him since childhood, so what can I do?"

"Uh, Sister? It's frightening when you complain like that."

"Ugh! Enough! Madam, three more bottles of wine!"

The madam cheerfully complied. She brought the wine and set it on the table with her tentacles. Sioux gawked, but Sapphee wasn't joking.

"S-Sister, that's too much for you to drink..."

"What are you talking about? You're going to help me. This is a contest!"

"Huh?"

The madam placed a glass identical to Sapphee's in front of Sioux, who clearly hadn't anticipated getting roped into this. While she sat there dumbfounded, Sapphee filled her glass with white wine.

"S-Sister! Not so much."

"I'm tired from researching the Sheep Sleep. I wanted to speak with you, but now I'm done. For the rest of the night, I'm just going to let everything go."

"Ugh. When did you become a sister that didn't listen to anyone?!" Sioux was one to talk. "I've never participated in a drinking contest."

"We just take turns. If I win, you tell me the secret you've been hiding."

"Er... And what if I win?"

"Then I won't ask you anymore. You can just stay in Lindworm and do as you like."

Sioux picked up the glass and put it to her lips.

Perhaps she hadn't yet acquired a taste for alcohol. When she took a mouthful of wine, her eyebrows knitted, and she stuck out her tongue. But she emptied her glass.

She had accepted the challenge.

"Well then."

Sapphee emptied her glass, too. She was used to the taste. As a regular at the inn, she had tried every wine they offered. The madam also knew what Sapphee liked to drink, and had brought three of her favorite wines. In other words, Sapphee had a distinct advantage.

As if to drive that point home, crackers, poached eggs, and a stewed oil dish appeared without either sister placing an order. The kraken madam seemed to be encouraging Sapphee, and the message was clear: *Go for it, rouse some excitement, but don't make any problems.*

"Would you like to know something, Sioux?" Sapphee smirked as she poured the next round of wine into their glasses.

"Wh-what is it?"

"I've never passed out from drinking."

Sapphee shed her normal composed demeanor, calling her win with a glass in one hand and a knowing smile on her face.

"Wh-what happened?"

"What does it look like?"

"I don't know what it looks like! That's why I'm asking!" Glenn shouted, not caring that it was the middle of the night.

He knew that Sapphee and Sioux had gone to the Giant Squid's Inn together, and that they were drinking. But once he'd finished his exams for the day, they still weren't back. Even after he cleaned his tools and paid the fairies, they still hadn't returned. Just as Glenn resolved to go pick them up, there was a loud knock at the door.

"Sister passed out. I managed to carry her back here."

"You *carried* her?"

The bottom halves of lamia bodies were incredibly long and heavy. It would be an impressive feat for a member of even the mightiest species to carry one. For a human, it should have been impossible. Nevertheless, Sioux had draped Sapphee's upper half across her back, and wrapped Sapphee's bottom half around her waist. From the side, Glenn could see that Sioux's center of gravity was off.

She was liable to fall at any moment.

“Well, I don’t think we’ll get her upstairs. Lay her on the clinic bed. There’s a big one made for monsters.”

“Okay! Umph!” Sioux was sweating.

The Giant Squid’s Inn was close, but carrying a lamia must have been extremely laborious. On top of that, Sioux had been drinking. Her face was completely red.

Glenn helped lay Sapphee on the bed. The lamia moaned, coiling her long body.

“I apologize, Brother. Neither of us would back down from the drinking contest.”

“Drinking contest?”

As far as Glenn knew, Sapphee had never gotten blackout drunk. Not only did she know exactly how much alcohol she could handle, she could hold it well. How had she ended up like this?

“How much did you drink?”

“Ummm... I think we opened ten bottles.”

“Don’t you know your limits?”

If it had been a contest, Sioux had to have drunk just as much as Sapphee. Even though her face was red, however, she didn’t seem inebriated.

According to the literature, Demonitis patients whose bodies transformed tended to gain a high tolerance for alcohol. Even in folklore, drawings showed demons enjoying wine and other spirits.

Glenn resolved never to drink with his sister.

Sioux panted, shoulders heaving. Sweat soaked through her clothes. Her horn tips were red, and a steam-like substance poured off them. If Glenn didn’t do something, Sioux would pass out, as she had in Aluloona’s vines.

“I am tired. I will leave you now.”

“Wait, Sioux. You’re sweating. Why don’t you rinse off in the canal and come back? I have something I need to talk with you about.”

“S-something to talk about? But I am dizzy from the heat. Cold water might make it worse.”

“No, it will have the opposite effect.”

Glenn hadn’t just been sitting around waiting for Sioux and Sapphee to return. He’d been reading. Cold water was the eastern

treatment for Demonitis. He'd corroborated that information by researching the Litbeite family tree.

"If I'm right, a dip in the canal will help. This fever isn't like a normal one."

"Uhh... Brother, I can't understand anything so confusing right now."

"That's okay. Just follow me."

A canal ran right in front of Litbeite Clinic. It served as a road for water monsters, but no one would mind if Glenn and Sioux used it for a quick swim. Glenn lowered himself into the water beside Sioux; he had prepared washcloths and a small tub.

"Let's start by cooling your head."

"If you say so, Brother." Sioux removed her shoulder armor and gauntlets, stripping down to her undergarments. Glenn used the tub to dump canal water over her head.

"Ooooh!" The water felt good.

Sioux's thin, eastern-style undergarment—a simple shift—stuck to her naked body, her skin visible through the fabric. Even though he and Sioux were related, Glenn's eyes wandered over her body, which was fit from training. He wet a washcloth, taking care not to stare at her.

"Sioux, when you move, you feel hot, right?"

"Mm? Yes, that is right. Ever since I became a demon, I've been gaining muscle. But when I use all my power, I overheat, like today. I was told that, when that happens, I should get into bed and rest."

"I don't think that's good for you." Glenn wrung out the cloth and applied it to Sioux's forehead.

"Ahhhhhh!" She let out a relieved cry.

Glenn considered Sioux's increase in muscle, subcutaneous horns, and sudden fever. Demonitis caused all those symptoms.

No.

"Sioux, you're not sick."

"Huh?"

"Your fever... It's not the kind you'd get from a cold or an infectious disease. Your body built up heat by exerting an abnormal amount of energy. Everyone gets hot if they run at top speed, right? Your fever is the same sort of thing."

Glenn removed the cloth from her forehead. A puff of steam

drifted upwards.

As a demon, Sioux now had a higher capacity for physical exertion. That was clear from the fact that she'd carried Sapphee home. When a feat that a human would normally be incapable of was suddenly possible for Sioux's body, a large quantity of heat built up to compensate for the excessive exercise.

"You can't expel all the extra heat, so you end up just a step away from heatstroke. That's why you pass out. If you rest, you probably will eventually cool down, but it's more effective to use cold water or ice."

Even in the summer, Lindworm's canals remained cool.

The heat Sioux emitted was real. The water Glenn poured on her sizzled and evaporated. It looked as though the tips of her horns were slightly red as well. He wouldn't have been surprised if they burned any human who touched them.

"We should cool your horns, too."

"Okay!"

Glenn touched them with the wet cloth.

"B-Brother... My...my horns are sensitive..."

"I thought so."

Sioux squirmed ever so slightly. Glenn wasn't sure if her hips or knees gave out, but suddenly, she was on all fours.

"If your horns are this sensitive, it means that nerves and blood vessels run through them."

"What?!"

"It's not uncommon. Developing deer antlers are called 'velvet,' and have sensation. And nerves and blood vessels run through cow horns, even after they stop growing."

Sioux's horns were the same. When Glenn touched them, he could feel the heat. He patted them over and over with the wet cloth to cool them down.

"Ahh... Eeek... I-It's cold..."

"The trade-off for your new demon strength is that you end up with all this heat inside you. Given that, I know why you grew horns."

"Hmm?! Wh-what do you mean?!"

"On cold days, our ears and noses get cold, right? Body parts that protrude are built to let heat escape. In other words, Sioux, people with Demonitis develop horns with blood vessels for the same

purpose. They're cooling organs."

The horns protruding from Sioux's forehead probably specifically protected her brain, which could be damaged by overheating.

Glenn remembered that Skadi, the fire dragon, had horns on her head. If those were also for cooling, it would be consistent with his theory.

"Ahhh... Haaa... Oh... B-Brother, that is enough on my horns."

"No, we have to cool them properly. It seems as though demons are vulnerable to heat. You need to be careful to avoid fever."

"Haaa... B-but, Brother, then I can't work for the patrol team!"

"Your body is more important than work."

"Ooohh..." Sioux sighed, depleted of strength.

"For now, let's just cool your body. Next will be the groin."

"Huh?"

"C'mon, lie down."

"Are you sure, Brother?"

Glenn lay Sioux down. He balled up the cloth to use as a pillow. Sioux resisted only a little, perhaps out of embarrassment, but in the end, lay down.

Cooling the blood vessels was the most effective way to cool the body. Sioux's horns were one important area, but her underarms, neck, and groin would also cool her very effectively.

"Aggh!"

"Please, just hold on for a minute."

Sioux was still overheated. Pouring water over her head hadn't been enough to cool her entire body. Glenn applied the cloth to her groin.

"Haaa-aaargh!"

"Sioux, please don't move."

"Whaaa!" Her voice sounded strange.

She looked like a raccoon dog—an animal found only in the east. Glenn thought this observation might anger her, so he kept it to himself.

"How is it? Does it feel good?"

"Ahhh. It is still cold... No, it is perfect now."

"Okay, let's cool the other side."

“Huh? Ah! Eeek!”

Sioux’s reaction was pretty excessive. Glenn wondered if she was extra-sensitive to cold now. At any rate, the treatment seemed to work, so he continued. He left the cloth on her groin and submerged another. The last spot would be her neck.

“Agghh!”

“Okay, now don’t move.”

“It is coooold!”

Sioux’s body contracted as Glenn gently applied the cloth to her neck. He didn’t know how much she drank, but she smelled faintly of alcohol. Hopefully, the cold water was also sobering her up.

“Haa... Ohh... Brother. I feel cool now.”

Glenn put his hand on Sioux’s forehead. It wasn’t hot; it was normal body temperature.

“Yes. You seem much better. But let’s just rest here for a few more minutes.”

“Okay...”

Sioux lay down next to the canal. Her muscular abdomen showed through her wet shift. According to legend, demons had special muscles that appeared similar to human muscles, but harbored superhuman strength and explosive power.

“Wooo!” Sioux let out a big sigh. The night wind probably felt good on her skin.

“Sioux...”

“Hmm?”

“I’ve been thinking... Demonitis makes you grow horns and muscle, right?”

Muscular changes were a symptom of many diseases. But the metamorphosis of Demonitis was more like the creation of a brand-new being. The fever, and heat-releasing horns, seemed more like the bodily functions of a completely unknown animal.

“I wonder if it’s really an illness.”

“If it is not an illness, then...”

“Yeah. I tried to think backwards. Sioux, you don’t have to move, but will you listen to me?”

“Ohhh... What is it?” Sioux remained sprawled out and only focused her gaze on Glenn.

"I looked up the old records. Demonitis only occurs in one bloodline. Most cases appear in children between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Their horns grow longer and longer, and they have fevers. That's why everyone thinks they're sick, but it's just...puberty."

"Huh?"

"You didn't catch Demonitis and then become a demon. You were born with demon blood."

Sioux stared, dumbfounded, with wide eyes.

"Right now, no true demons exist. But they appear in folklore, so they must have existed at some point in the east. Humans chased them out, and they went extinct...or mixed with another species, and are no longer distinguishable as separate."

If Sioux had been born with demon blood, everything made sense. When she'd developed her new muscles, her demon features had appeared. In that sense, Sioux was similar to Illy, who'd realized she descended from phoenixes when she went through puberty, and the physical characteristics of her lineage finally became apparent.

Glenn rubbed Sioux's horns as he told her all this.

Her eyes filled with tears as big as raindrops. "Waahhh! Ohhhh! Ahhhh!"

"Sioux, why are you crying?!"

"Hic! Waah! Ahhhh! Why am I crying? Of course I would cry! Does that mean our parents are not my real mother and father? A-are you not my brother? Waaah!"

Glenn grew flustered. "No! Of course I am! I told you, Demonitis only appears in a certain bloodline."

"Hicc! Waaah! S-so, whose child am I?"

"There were many Demonitis cases in the Litbeit family tree. Mother married in, so it must be Father's bloodline. Even Souen and I are carriers of monster blood."

There was no way to confirm it. It was just a theory. Still, it all made sense.

Of course, Demonitis didn't only occur in the Litbeit family. It was possible that many families in the human regions unknowingly carried demon blood.

How ironic that the inhabitants of the human supremacist east carried demon blood. Monsters hadn't left the east. They'd simply changed their form.

"Our faces look a lot alike. There's no question that we're

siblings.”

“W-will you grow horns as well, Brother?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think that it’s completely impossible, but the horns seem to grow during puberty, so I probably won’t get them at this point. We are still the same species, though.”

Further research might prove that they even carried dragon blood. Perhaps, if Glenn trained hard, he could build demon-like strength. It was all just a theory. However, it was enough of a theory to turn the eastern regions’ traditions completely upside down.

Maybe I should publicize it.

Glenn stopped himself from continuing with that train of thought. First, he needed to write a paper on the topic, as a doctor. He could leave the rest to his brother, who was already involved in politics.

“If you really hate the horns, we can remove them surgically, but you’ll be left with scars. I wouldn’t really recommend it. Your horns and ability to overheat are part of you now. If you learn to live with both the advantages and disadvantages of being a demon—”

“Ohhhh! Brother!” Sioux embraced him, her strength knocking him over.

She rubbed her face against his chest, soaking him with canal water and tears.

“Brother, you idiot! You had me worried! I thought I was an orphan abandoned by my real family!”

“No! Of course not! But would you mind not hugging me when your body is all wet?” Sioux’s forceful embrace had nearly broken Glenn’s back. “You are my sister. No matter what.”

“I know, Brother,” she giggled.

Sioux smiled at him, just as she had when they were kids.

“Thank you for letting me stay here, but today, I move to the patrol team dormitories. Do not worry about me!”

Sioux’s voice was as loud as ever. It was too early, and Glenn wished she would speak more softly. Sioux had decided to leave Litbeit Clinic, saying that she wanted to learn how to make it on her own.

“Be careful. Work hard. If you need anything, just ask. And make

sure you write a letter to Father, Mother, and Brother. They're worried about you."

"You have some nerve telling me that. How many years did you go without writing a single letter to us?"

"Uhh..." Glenn didn't have a comeback to her sly remark. Although he sometimes wrote to Dione and Dr. Cthulhy, he was generally a poor letter writer.

Sioux left the clinic and looked up at the second floor. Glenn followed her gaze, searching for the lamia who wasn't there.

"Brother, is Sister all right?"

"Yes, she's fine. I'll look after her."

"But..." Sioux seemed worried.

Sapphee hadn't opened her eyes since the night of their drinking contest.

"It's my fault," Glenn said. "I thought she'd just drunk too much. It never crossed my mind that she might have contracted the sleeping disease."

"Will she wake up?"

"If it's a mild case, she will wake in a few days. But there haven't been many such cases lately. The symptoms are getting more and more severe." Glenn had received a number of new Sheep Sleep reports. The illness had suddenly become more serious over the past couple days.

The townsfolk were starting to worry that their loved ones might never awaken.

"And the cause is..."

"Yes."

A flock of pocket-sized sheep had entered the canal near the clinic. They'd transformed into some kind of wool raft and were now moving along the water. The fact that they could do something like that proved that they weren't ordinary sheep. Every day, the number of sheep increased, and with it, the number of sleeping patients with ever-worsening symptoms.

"Sapphee was researching the Sheep Sleep's cause. I'll pick up where she left off to see if there is anything I can do."

"Well then, I'll leave it to you. If you need strength, call on Sioux." The rookie patrol team member smiled at him.

With Sapphee asleep, Glenn was sure he'd need to call on Sioux

sooner rather than later.

“I have to go! There is a shortage of patrol team members, too, due to the sleeping disease. Goodbye, Brother!”

As Sioux walked away, Glenn reminded himself that she wasn’t a demon, she was a person.

No, that wasn’t right. She was both a demon *and* a person.

When he’d left home, Sioux was just a child, but at some point, she grew into a woman. Since coming to Lindworm, she’d already become something of a celebrity around town—even more so than Glenn.

“Well then.” He returned to the clinic.

Sapphee was still sleeping.

Glenn turned the door sign to the side that read “Examination in Progress” and started his daily tasks.

It would be fine. He had the fairies. He wasn’t alone.

“I need to focus.” He slapped himself hard in the face.

He had solved the Demonitis issue, but the Sheep Sleep was a bigger threat.

Sapphee was sleeping, and Cthulhy wasn’t there.

It was up to him.

He had to give it all he had, just like his baby sister was doing.

Case 03: The Arachne with Mourning Silk Syndrome

Sheep Sleep.

The illness running rampant through the city was perplexing.

At first, it hadn't seemed like such a big deal, but there were more and more new patients every day. And there was also absolutely no sign of Sapphee waking up anytime soon.

The real mystery was that, although patients remained asleep, they moved spontaneously, eating when hungry, and going to the restroom when they needed to relieve themselves.

The number of palm-sized sheep in Lindworm was also increasing.

As Glenn examined patients with the sleeping disease, he continued searching for a way to cure it. Even some of his regular patients had been struck with Sheep Sleep and were unable to move. Glenn went out making house calls as often as he could, running through a town gone silent as many of its inhabitants slept.

However, one patient had made an appointment.

"Doctor..."

"The princess's condition?"

"There is nothing wrong with her body." Glenn had come to the Scythia Manor to examine Tisalia.

The bedroom's owner lay on a luxurious canopy bed. As far as Glenn could see, she was sleeping lightly. She might have been somewhere between the real world and the dream world. Kay and Lorna, who always accompanied Tisalia, were in the room with her. Glenn had seen their worried looks before, on the faces of Tisalia's parents. Her mother had worn an especially dark expression, frightened that her only daughter hadn't woken up for a whole week.

According to Glenn's tests, Tisalia had fallen victim to the Sheep Sleep. However, she spoke multiple times during the exam.

"Doctor... No..."

"Mmm... I know it's our honeymoon, Doctor, but still..."

"A hot spring? Just the two of us?"

Tisalia wore a thin nightgown, and whenever she rolled over in

her sleep, it exposed her voluptuous breasts.

“The poor princess...”

“As you can see, she’s dreaming about marrying you, Doctor.”

Kay wiped her tears with a handkerchief.

Lorna seemed to have been keeping track of Tisalia’s sleeptalk. “It’s been a week since the princess fell asleep. In that time, she’s had a formal marriage interview, introduced you to her parents, held a huge wedding, and inherited Scythia Manor. Now she’s dreaming of your honeymoon at a tropical resort in the monster regions.”

“Huh...” Glenn didn’t know how to answer. He was certainly pleased to be so admired.

Both humans and monsters dreamed. But there were two types of sleep. Dreams only occurred in light sleep. Sleepwalking happened during deep sleep.

“Mmm...”

While Glenn contemplated this, Tisalia stood up. Her eyes were half-open, and her face had a distant expression. She looked around and picked up the pitcher beside her bed.

“Is this...?”

“Could it be?”

“No, it’s not.” Glenn held the attendants back. Tisalia gulped down the water she poured for herself and staggered back to bed. She seemed to be dreaming again right away, hugging a pillow tight.

Glenn nodded. “So, she gets things for herself.”

“That’s right.”

“Doctor, is this a type of sleepwalking?”

Glenn was already shaking his head before Lorna finished her question. “Sleepwalking is a condition that takes place during deep sleep. During that time, the sleepwalker has no dreams, and doesn’t remember what happens. I don’t think you can transition between deep sleep and light sleep this quickly.”

“Then...”

“What is this condition?”

“I’m sorry. I’m still trying to figure that out.” It was all Glenn could say.

Tisalia seemed relaxed, but she had work to do as a warrior. If she was unable to participate in competitions, it would hurt both her income and her reputation. She needed to get back to normal as soon

as possible.

“Doctor, don’t work too hard.”

“Huh?”

At some point, Lorna had moved next to him. She slipped something into his coat pocket. There was a subtle floral scent, like potpourri.

“I heard that Sapphee is also sleeping. Dr. Cthulhy may be on a business trip, but that doesn’t mean you have to take on everything.”

“But...aren’t you worried about Tisalia?”

“The princess always trains so hard. A little sleep won’t kill her.”

“We are worried about you, her future husband, as well.”

“I-I’ll be careful.”

It was true, Glenn was alone right now. He was used to relying on Sapphee and Cthulhy without a second thought. It felt nice to be encouraged by Kay and Lorna.

“The only thing I can say is that I’m not convinced Sheep Sleep patients are safe. It’s possible they could wander off somewhere while sleeping. Please make sure that someone always watches her.”

“Yes, of course.”

“We are always with the princess.”

He couldn’t let down his guard with those two whispering in his ear. He might get seduced again. Glenn thanked Lorna for the potpourri and left Tisalia’s room.

“Mmm... Doctor... Come closer...”

Tisalia’s parting words seemed to speak to Glenn directly, and he felt embarrassed.

Although he wasn’t proud of it, Glenn was completely incapable of doing household chores. The fairies cleaned the house regularly, and Sapphee cooked. Glenn sanitized his medical tools, but anything else—like washing his clothes—he usually left until Sapphee started complaining. He didn’t know how to be independent in his daily life. Now that Sapphee was sleeping, when it came to meals...

“Ummm...”

“Hm?” Arahnia sat across from Glenn at the dining table, staring.

“Sorry, can you not look at me so much? It’s hard to eat.”

“Oh, I apologize! I’m just so glad you’re eating, Doc. Really.”

“N-no, the pleasure is mine. Thank you for going to the trouble of making me food.”

Arahnia wore her normal attire under an apron she’d borrowed from Sapphee. She’d made miso soup with a stock base, a uniquely eastern white rice, and grilled freshwater fish, all garnished with pickled mountain vegetables. That type of meal was normal in the east, but most Lindworm residents didn’t know how to make those dishes. If Glenn were being honest, he would have loved some fermented soybeans as well, but he wasn’t sure Arahnia could handle the smell.

“I didn’t realize you were so good at eastern cooking, Arahnia.”

“I acquired the taste during my designer apprenticeship in the human regions. I’m so glad that eastern ingredients have become cheaper with the expanded trade.” Arahnia drank eastern Ginjo sake as she spoke.

As soon as she’d heard that Sapphee caught the sleeping disease, Arahnia had come to visit. Glenn had mentioned that, without Sapphee, he was having trouble with daily meals. Arahnia offered to cook for him, since he couldn’t manage it himself.

“It’s delicious, Arahnia.”

“Isn’t it? Whenever you want eastern food, just let me know.”

The whole meal tasted like home to Glenn. With Sioux in town, he’d been thinking of home more and more. He would have loved to make a trip back, but it was impossible when the Sheep Sleep had grown into an epidemic.

“I hope I’m not bothering you. You must be busy at the clinic.”

“It’s fine. You’ve really helped me out.” Glenn often went without food when he was busy. He’d even passed out from overwork once. He was grateful that Arahnia had taken over his meals.

“They say there’s a labor shortage everywhere in Lindworm. How is Loose Silk Sewing?”

“Well, our branch manager fell asleep immediately. We aren’t taking new orders, and we’re somehow getting by with the employees who are still awake. I mean, we have to keep up with the orders we already took... But I have no idea if we’ll make the deadlines.”

“Is it too much work?”

“No, no, that’s not it. The orders within town are fine, but the orders outside Lindworm are handled by Scythia Transportation. They

have a labor shortage, too, so I don't know if they can deliver the orders in time." Arahnia sighed.

If the Sheep Sleep cut off the transportation web that served as Lindworm's lifeline, it would hurt businesses like the workshop and sewing factory.

"Have you heard anything from Aluloona? I understand that the patrol team was trying to find the Sheep Sleep's cause."

"Yes, that's right. And I was told to figure out a treatment."

"That makes sense. How is it going? Do you think you can do it?"

"It's not going well at all."

Glenn didn't have a clue how to solve this problem. The Central Hospital researchers were falling victim to the Sheep Sleep one by one. When a patient was infected, stimulants became ineffective. Glenn wanted to look into the tiny sheep themselves, but that meant he would risk succumbing to the disease as well.

"How did Sapphee fall asleep?"

"She was researching the palm-sized sheep. I owe her an apology, but I went into her room and found her notes."

"Oh, no. I'm sure she'll be angry with you."

Glenn had already prepared himself for that.

According to Sapphee's notes, she had been trying to make an antidote for the sleeping disease. In the process, she absorbed whatever component caused it.

"When the sheep's wool is disturbed, it seems to emit a powder. That powder affects the brain, and knocks people unconscious. Even a light touch can scatter the powder everywhere."

"Oh, that's horrible! Is it similar to Aluloona's pollen?"

Glenn nodded.

Alraune pollen had aphrodisiac effects on other beings, making pollination easier. But what was the sheep powder's purpose? What was the advantage of making other beings sleep?

"The number of patients is increasing, right?"

"That's right, and so is the number of sheep. The Sheep Sleep has become an epidemic, and it seems as though the powder's sleeping effects are only growing stronger. At first, Sheep Sleep patients woke within a short time, but the symptoms are getting more severe."

Lindworm now contained so many sheep that somebody walking

down the street would come across one every few steps. The sheep formed flocks, moving together. Glenn needed to figure out where they came from, and why they were multiplying.

“Sapphee’s notes also contained a recipe for the antidote. We’ll have to experiment to see whether it will work, but I think I could at least put together a test batch.”

“If you do, then the problem is solved, right?”

“No, I don’t think that simply making the medicine will be enough. Even if the victims wake up, it’s very possible that they will go back to sleep if they absorb the sheep powder again.”

“It’s so complicated,” Arahnia sighed.

Glenn felt the same way. He had to be careful not to contract the disease, but he also wanted to catch the sheep. He couldn’t even imagine the issues Aluloona would face if he didn’t solve this problem right away.

“Thank you for the meal. It really hit the spot.”

“Of course.” Arahnia’s face had a calm smile.

The arachne designer used to have an annoying habit of stealing other people’s things, but Glenn hadn’t heard any complaints about her lately. In fact, he’d heard that she was working hard supervising the staff at Loose Silk Sewing. She was also getting along with younger monster women, like Lulala and Memé.

“What are you staring at me for? I’m getting flushed.”

Arahnia had even saved Glenn from Aluloona the other day. There wasn’t any hint of the bad girl she used to be.

“Your demeanor has changed, Arahnia.”

“Really?”

“Yes. You’re nicer.”

“If that’s true, it’s all thanks to you and Sapphee.”

“Huh? What did I do?”

Arahnia folded her four arms. “Doctor, you can’t just ask a girl anything that pops into your head.”

“I-I’m sorry...?”

“Good girls have to keep some secrets.”

“Wh-what?!”

Arahnia gently stroked Glenn’s lips. The next instant, her white silk covered his mouth like a gag. He was able to remove it easily,

however. It didn't have the characteristic stickiness of arachne silk.

"Teehee..." Arahnia giggled, having successfully stopped his questions. "Well then, I'll do the dishes and visit Sapphee before going home. Feel free to work on the sleeping disease investigation, Doctor."

"N-no, Arahnia, you don't have to do all that."

Glenn tried to protest, but Arahnia brushed him off.

"No, it's fine. I want to help you."

"But..."

"When there's a problem, we need to help each other out. Are you not interested in relying on me the way you do Sapphee? That would make me sad."

Glenn couldn't protest anymore. "Well, okay then. Thank you very much."

The town was in crisis, but Glenn had to continue with his work. Lindworm's fate rested completely on his shoulders. Arahnia was right; when there were problems, they needed to help each other. And Arahnia had hands to spare.

"Goodnight, Doc." Arahnia called to Glenn as he returned to the examination room.

She was so different from before. It was a composed and dignified goodbye.

Thanks to Arahnia, Glenn no longer had any trouble with his daily activities, but that didn't make it any easier to discover a solution for the Sheep Sleep. Still, he had Sapphee's research. According to her notes, he could extract an antidote from coffee.

The problem was that medication alone wouldn't solve the problem. If he didn't figure out where the palm-sized sheep came from, and how to get rid of them, then the epidemic might never go away.

"Hey, Memé, do I really have to go?"

"O-of course you do! Do you think I can meet that wild boar, Sioux, on my own?!"

“I could always deliver the sword to Sioux alone.”

“B-but if it isn’t delivered by the workshop employee who received it, that might cause problems later. So, Doctor, please come with me to the patrol team guardroom!” There were tears in Memé’s eye as she gripped the cloth bag containing Sioux’s beloved sword. “If I go alone, she’ll definitely rush me and give me a big hug... It’s scary...!”

“Hmmm. She might.” That sounded like something Glenn’s sister might do. Sioux would be so excited about having her sword back that she’d probably express her gratitude with her entire body.

Glenn and Memé were mid-conversation when they arrived at the patrol team guardroom, where Aluloona had attacked Glenn.

A number of patrol team soldiers milled about. After Memé showed them the sword’s claim check, they let her pass. For once, she didn’t appear the least bit timid. Glenn also made it through easily.

“How do you know the patrol team so well, Memé?”

“I-I’ve delivered weapons and equipment to them before...”

“Damn... We probably should just have asked you.”

“What are you talking about?”

Glenn shook his head. Memé would certainly be surprised if he told her about Sapphee and Arahnia dressing as prostitutes, and their adventure in the entertainment district.

In the back of the guardroom, they saw Sioux pouring well water over her head.

“Oh! Brother! And you, Tatara-maker!”

“Who are you calling Tatara? Is that an eastern word? I’m Memé!”

“Oh, sorry! If you’re here, Memé, does that mean you finished polishing my sword?!” Sioux wiped her wet body dry. She looked ready to rush Memé and give her a hug.

Memé hid behind Glenn.

“I-It should be well-polished, but it’s my first time, so please check. The process for swords from the east has a lot of steps!”

“Yes, ma’am! Let me look at a cyclops’s work!”

Sioux took the cloth bag and removed the sword. It reflected the evening sun like a mirror. Glenn didn’t really know anything about weapons. From the way Sioux kept nodding, though, he saw that Memé had done a good job, worthy of the cyclops name.

“There are no more nicks in the blade! They have been repaired well. When I was working as a guard, I once took down a bear, and it left this huge dent...”

“Th-that’s all well and good, but can you please give me your claim check and pay the fee now?”

“Yes, of course.”

Sioux’s voice was very loud, and Memé looked as though she was about to cry. There was nothing for Glenn to do, so he observed his sister. She wasn’t wearing her equipment, just her thin undergarment. She gave the coins and claim check to Memé.

Glenn heard yelling from the back of the guardroom.

“Sioux, were you in the middle of training?”

“Yes, I was. But when I exercise. I get steamed up. Ooohh... I’m so slow.” Sioux made fists and flailed her arms. Water droplets flew everywhere, spraying Glenn and Memé.

“The captain said she cannot have me fainting again, so I have to keep cool. She also told me to move as little as possible when fighting. However, that is difficult. I am not sure what to do,” Sioux muttered as she resumed pouring water over her head.

Unfortunately, there was nothing Glenn could do about that. Sioux would just have to come to terms with her new body.

“Th-that sword is heavy.”

“Hm?”

Memé almost sounded like she was talking to herself, even as she hid behind Glenn.

“S-so, I mean, it’s too big for your body. There are swords that would be easier for you to handle... Swinging that one around could make you faint again!”

“Hmm. I understand. But Duke Auchraw of the elder statesmen presented me with this weapon, so it is not easy to give up. I want to become a martial arts master worthy of this famous sword.”

Glenn hadn’t expected that. The elder statesmen were an eastern political organization that basically ruled the human regions. Duke Auchraw, in particular, was known for his hatred of monsters. Yet he had given Sioux this sword. Perhaps that was before her demon characteristics appeared. She must have been an extremely successful senate guard.

“You’re very learned about weaponry, Memé!”

“I-It’s just my job...”

“No, no! I am incapable of caring for my sword properly. I admire people like you. If only I were so skilled.”

“Y-you just need to be calmer! If you could just...quiet down for a minute, and concentrate...”

“My life would be much easier if I could do that.” If Sioux possessed a tail, it would certainly have been wagging. “Ugggh. I...I will not lose!”

“Lose to who?!”

“To myself!” Sioux yelled as she dumped more water on her head.

Memé cowered. “Th-that’s all you needed from me, right? I’ve decided not to accept new orders at the workshop, so if you ask for anything more, it will be a challenge.”

“That is all! Are you so busy due to the sleeping disease?”

“Well, that’s one reason...”

Memé’s big eye looked at Glenn. She probably wasn’t trying to glare, but her gaze was extremely forceful. Glenn had been tasked with resolving the Sheep Sleep epidemic, and he had nothing to show for it.

“Th-there are a lot of jobs in the workshop, but...we also need outside help to do a lot of things. We have the tools required for blades, metal, and leather, but for cloth work, we need Loose Silk Sewing... They are having a tough time, too...”

“Tough time?”

“Y-you don’t know?”

All of Lindworm was having difficulty, but the way Memé put it, Loose Silk Sewing was in pandemonium. However, Arahnia hadn’t said anything about that when she came to make Glenn’s dinners.

“Arahnia and her new recruit are the only ones who haven’t caught the sleeping disease. They must be running around like crazy. Arahnia said that she can’t finish her sewing work during the day, so she’s taking it home with her.”

“Really? Yesterday, when she came to make me dinner, she seemed fine...”

By the time Glenn realized what he’d let slip, it was too late. Memé’s overbearing glare and Sioux’s narrowed eyes focused on him.

“Brother... Were you with that spider woman yesterday?”

“How could you make Arahnia cook for you when she’s

so busy?"

"That makes me sad, Brother... Even I am cooking for myself..."

"Fr-freeloader..."

The two young women glowered.

Glenn wasn't very good at defending himself. All he could do was accept the criticism they dished out. He mentally swore that he would do more chores.

"No, it's not like that! Arahnia came on her own!"

"Whooooaa..."

"Ugh, sorry," Glenn mumbled.

"Don't apologize to me, apologize to Arahnia!"

Memé was right. It was more than Glenn could bear to be told off so forcefully by the cyclops, who was normally timid.

"I get it. I'll apologize to Arahnia."

"It's not that simple. Arahnia is ready to pass out!"

"What do you mean?"

"Lately, whenever I go to the sewing factory, Arahnia is pale and unsteady... You didn't notice, Doctor? Didn't you see her yesterday?"

"I did see her, but nothing made me worry..."

Wait a minute. During dinner, Arahnia had been more composed than usual. Maybe she hadn't been feeling well. Maybe the difference in her behavior wasn't due to a change of heart, but illness.

"Her silk..."

"Huh?"

"Arahnia's silk wasn't very sticky. I pulled it off easily. Arachne silk is supposed to be stronger than steel, but..."

Of course, arachne could control how adhesive their silk was. Glenn had assumed that Arahnia was just teasing, and had weakened the adhesive on purpose. At the time, however, Arahnia was serious about not wanting to continue the conversation. As a doctor, he should have noticed that right away.

"Memé!"

"Eeek! D-Doctor, now you're yelling, too?!"

"Do you know where Arahnia lives?"

"I-I know..." Memé answered quietly. She averted her eye, but she seemed willing to show him. Glenn took her hand and ran out of

the guardroom.

“Be careful!” Sioux called after them nonchalantly as she continued to play in the cool water.

Arahnia’s mansion was close to the entertainment district, and built in the style of the human regions. Like her taste in food, Arahnia’s taste in architecture seemed to hail from the east.

They heard the sound of a loom from within.

Gachung-gachung.

The night was dark, and the lanterns throughout the house were lit. The illuminated loom cast an image on the wall like a shadow picture.

“S-so, she is inside...”

“Oh, good. Now I can examine her.”

“But...do you smell that? Like something is rotting?”

“Actually, that’s the food I brought. I think Arahnia could use it right now.”

“Hmm...” Memé looked doubtfully at the straw bundle Glenn held.

He didn’t think the food smelled bad, but apparently, monsters didn’t care for its scent. He hoped he could get Arahnia to eat it.

“What are you going to do, Dr. Glenn? Arahnia lives here alone, and I...”

“I’ll go directly inside. Please take this.”

Glenn thrust the bundle into Memé’s hands and approached Arahnia’s house.

Memé called after him. “What? Dr. Glenn?! This stinks...”

The garden was also eastern-style. It was a very familiar scene to Glenn. He took off his shoes on the veranda and opened the shoji door, revealing Arahnia behind the loom.

“Hey!” Arahnia screamed.

Of course, anyone would react that way if somebody just barged into their house. Glenn was surprised for a different reason, though.

Arahnia’s face, illuminated by a paper lantern, looked nothing like it had only the day before. She was extremely pale, her lips dry. If

she'd shown up looking like that yesterday, Glenn could have done something right away.

"D-Doc...! You can't just show up here unannounced!"

"Arahnia, your face..."

"I thought I could keep you from noticing a bit longer. I guess that was wishful thinking. Memé? You don't have to hide."

Arahnia motioned for Memé to come inside, but the cyclops remained where she was. Maybe she felt guilty.

Arahnia's house was designed so that an arachne could live there comfortably. Many of the paper doors had been removed, and wooden hooks hung from the ceiling and walls, probably so that Arahnia could attach her silk to them easily.

Glenn thought that living alone in such a big house must be lonely, though.

"I'm sorry. I asked Memé to tell me where you lived. Actually, I forced it out of her."

"No need to be sorry. I knew you'd figure it out sooner or later."

"So, you've been hiding how poorly you feel?"

Glenn held Arahnia's face in his hands. She'd concealed her poor health with makeup. Sapphee had sensitive skin, so she didn't wear many cosmetics, but a designer like Arahnia probably spent a lot of time on her appearance.

"Heh. Can't fool you, Doc."

"Will you let me examine you now?"

"I'm working at the moment..."

It looked as though Arahnia was making some sort of tapestry on the loom.

The arachne could weave just about anything from their silk, and having four arms made them incredibly skilled at the loom. They could work at impressive speeds, no matter how complicated the pattern.

"I'm more worried about your health."

"Me, Doc? I'm flattered." Arahnia went back to the loom's *gachung-gachung* sound.

"Huh? Oh." Glenn had anticipated that she wouldn't stop, even if he told her to.

"You were right," Arahnia mused. "I definitely changed. Long ago, I stole things from people. I thought that was the perfect life for a

bad woman like me, but...”

“Arahnia?”

“But on some level, I hated that version of myself. Sapphee and Tisalia were always so straightforward. I envied them.”

Glenn was silent. His eyes darted back and forth as he listened.

The colored silk Arahnia was using for the tapestry looked like it had already been dyed. There were large quantities of more than ten different colors. If the Loose Silk Sewing employees had all fallen to the Sheep Sleep, then the remaining employees must have generated this silk. In other words, it was probably mostly Arahnia’s.

How much of a burden was she bearing?

Although arachne could generate a lot of silk, there was always a limit.

“I even tried to be like them. When you told me I had changed, Doc...it felt like I had done something right.”

“That’s great news.”

“It is. So, won’t you let me keep mimicking them? I want to help you, Doc, since Sapphee can’t work. I want to be a good person.”

Glenn couldn’t believe how much Arahnia had changed. He didn’t see even a hint of scheming in her gentle eyes. Still, she was saying that she wanted to work herself to exhaustion for Sapphee, Glenn, and Loose Silk Sewing.

“Arahnia.”

“What is it?”

“You’re not a bad person. You’re always thinking about the people who will wear your clothes. Lulala and Memé always talk about how grateful they are to you. In fact, it was Memé who told me about your poor health.”

Glenn wondered whether Memé was listening from her hiding spot.

“You just had the poor luck of getting stuck with a nosy doctor.” Glenn had been hospitalized due to overwork before. He knew that he was the last person who should give this advice.

“Well, if you insist, Doc. I figured I’d be forced to take some time off sooner or later. Should I just get under the covers and rest?”

“No, that won’t work.” Glenn shook his head. “Arahnia, I’m afraid you might have Mourning Silk Syndrome.”

“Huh?”

“The silk that you produced the other day was fairly weak. I think you’ve been making too much. You might even be losing nutrients. If untreated, Mourning Silk Syndrome can be fatal. We need to take care of it right away.”

“Ergh...”

Arahnia lay down on the spot. She didn’t even care that the kimono she wore exposed her body. Her eight limbs made her look like a spider.

“The floor is hard and uncomfortable,” she complained.

“How do you usually sleep?” asked Glenn.

“In a silk hammock, of course.”

In other words, she couldn’t even spin enough silk to make herself a hammock.

“I see. Well, let’s begin the examination.”

“How exactly do you examine for Mourning Silk Syndrome?!”

The lower half of an arachne’s body was spider-like. At its tip was a kind of hole called a spinneret—the most important arachne organ, which spun silk.

“By looking at your spinneret.”

“Er... Ahh... Ooooh... D-do what you must.”

Arahnia covered her face with two hands, as if embarrassed to have her spinneret examined.

“Hmm...”

Her abdomen was huge. On the bottom were five claw-shaped organs, and in the middle, a small, open hole—Arahnia’s spinneret. The claws made it possible to shoot the fluid she generated in a specific direction.

“I’ll start by touching the surrounding area.”

“Hmm... Oof.”

Glenn touched the claws around the hole. They were hard, and felt as though they would break if he handled them wrong. When he brushed their tips, they spread open like blooming flowers.

“Mmmm...”

Just as Glenn expected, the claws were dry to the touch. They were supposed to be sticky at all times. Their dryness was proof that Arahnia was dehydrated, and suffering from Mourning Silk Syndrome.

“Mm, mmm... D-Doc, you’re tantalizing...”

“S-sorry, does it tickle?”

“Mmmm... Uh, y-yes, but... I don’t know.”

Arahnia’s eyes were moist, but she hadn’t lost the laughter they contained.

“This just makes me want to be touched more. Isn’t it strange? Even though it’s...torturous... Why?”

“This is the first time I’ve examined you, Arahnia. If you are uncomfortable, please tell me.”

“Nothing feels uncomfortable... You’re good!”

Arahnia had tried to seduce Glenn before, when she helped him during Skadi’s surgery. Her kleptomania had started to improve around that time.

“I’m sorry. I’m trying not to make this too burdensome.”

“It’s okay... You can...put the burden on me...”

“Arahnia?”

This wasn’t the type of open seduction that Aluloona had tried previously. A woman as strong and capable as Arahnia suddenly showing such a gentle side was endearing to Glenn, perhaps because it reminded him of Sapphee. The two women were probably such good friends because they were so alike.

Glenn shook his head and tried to concentrate on the task at hand.

“Mmmm... I-It’s just a little scary. How many fingers are you going to use?”

“Two.” Glenn disinfected his fingers and slid them inside the hole.

The creased muscle was wet with mucus. The interior of an arachne abdomen was extremely complex, and a network of blood vessels and nerves ran vertically and horizontally. Glenn tried stroking inside the hole.

“Mmm... Eee... Mmmmyaaa.”

The hole entrance contracted to tolerate the stimulation, the claws on the outside repeatedly opening and closing. Glenn’s hand tickled, as though it was being lightly nibbled.

As I thought, there isn’t much silk...

Arachne silk existed in the body as a liquid. However, when it left the body, it reacted with the air and changed into string. By adjusting the liquid’s composition, it was possible to generate sticky

webbing or silky string, depending on what was needed.

“Oh, aahh, mmm... D-Doc?”

“Sorry. Just a second.”

“Ooooh?! Y-you can’t just pull out without saying anything!”

Glenn had withdrawn his fingers from the spinneret to check the mucus. He tried rubbing his fingertips together, but the mucus evaporated almost immediately.

“It doesn’t change to string when it touches the air. Your mucus lacks important nutrients.”

“Oooh... Ahhh... Is that so?”

“Yes. It’s due to your exhaustion, and the fact that you’ve produced too much string. Are you not eating properly, either?”

“I’ve always been a light eater... I am drinking, though.”

“You need to cut back on the alcohol, too.”

Glenn penetrated the spinneret again with his fingers.

“Mmm! D-Doc, warn me, at least!”

“I’m sorry. I just want to check a little more. This time I will go a bit deeper.”

“M-more?! Eeek!”

There was a squishing sound. Glenn felt fleshy resistance.

“Does it hurt?”

“N-no, but...i-it feels weird when you go that deep...”

Arahnia’s entire body convulsed. Her spider legs, in particular, quivered.

Glenn checked the mucus membrane inside her spinneret. The muscle felt a bit hard and inflamed. That was probably caused by Arahnia’s body producing silk without sufficient mucus, since mucus typically protected the spinneret’s interior.

“Mmmm... Whoooahh.”

Arahnia was breathing hard.

Glenn could feel someone watching him. When he looked back, he saw a bright red face’s large eyeball peeking through a crack in the shoji door.

“Memé, I know you’re worried, but please try not to watch the examination.”

“S-sorry.”

The door closed firmly. However, it seemed as though Memé was still listening. She clearly admired Arahnia.

“Ugh...” Glenn muttered.

“Ahh... Oh. Wh-what happened, Doc?”

“I’m sorry. The membrane is all tangled up... I can’t really get my hand out.”

“Huh? Heee... Mmm!”

“If you tense up too much, it’ll exert pressure on my hand. I know this is very stimulating, but please try to relax.”

“Mmmaaahhh... You’re joking...right?”

Arahnia panted as Glenn fidgeted, trying to free his fingers from the mucus.



“Haaa! Ahhh! Mmma!”

Arahnia bit her own finger in response to the stimulation, but that wasn't enough to hold back her voice. Her entire body shook, her back arching.

“Okay... Just a little more...”

“Ahhh! Mmaa! Yaah! Yaammm!”

“I...got it!”

There was another squishy sound.

Glenn's hand, wet with white liquid, was finally free from Arahnia's spinneret.

“Mmmmwaaa!”

Arahnia's body seemed to hop. She'd probably reached the limit of what she could handle. Her spider legs twitched, showing how strongly Glenn had stimulated her.

White silk stretched from Arahnia's spinneret, still stuck to Glenn's fingers.

“I think I understand now.”

“Mmm... Ahhh... Ahhh...”

Arahnia was still breathing heavily, but she was starting to calm down. Glenn looked at his sticky fingers. The string connecting them to her spinneret broke.

“Arahnia, just how hard were you working?”

“Well, over the past week...”

“How much silk are you making each day?”

She was silent.

“Tell me the truth.”

Glenn moved closer. He was towering over her, but that couldn't be helped. It was the bare minimum needed to get anything out of the stubborn Arahnia.

“D-Doc, you're too close...”

“Answer me.”

Arahnia turned beet red. It might have been the first time Glenn ever saw her blush.

“I think around fifty spools...or so...”

“A-are you trying to kill yourself?” Memé's voice came from beyond the shoji door.

Glenn was thinking the same thing. Even though Arahnia was an arachne, producing that much silk could be life-threatening. If she kept it up, her body's nutrients would continue to dwindle, and symptoms such as anemia and malnutrition could develop. Arahnia covered her face with her four arms.

"My diagnosis is Mourning Silk Syndrome. You are prohibited from spinning silk. Please, get some rest."

Arahnia's condition was serious, but it was treatable with sufficient rest and recuperation.

"Loose Silk Sewing should shut down for the time being. I'll notify Aluloona. You might receive something from the City Council."

"From the City Council? That would mean I really can't work."

Arahnia lay facedown. She wasn't even concerned that her voluptuous breasts were pressing into the floor. In a way, it looked like she was sleeping.

"Now, shall we start the treatment?"

"Huh? Treatment?" Arahnia's voice went up an octave.

"Um, Doc. Haven't I been secreting too much silk? I thought sleeping would cure me!"

"It will, but you will recover more quickly with a therapeutic diet and nutrient supplements."

"Therapeutic diet?" Memé opened the shoji door from the courtyard and came in, holding her nose. "D-do you mean this?"

Arahnia also had a disgusted look on her face. Glenn, who was used to and appreciated the food's smell, had no reaction.

"This meal is a small thank you for all you've done. I'm going to prepare it for you."

"I thought you couldn't cook, Doctor."

"I have a few tricks up my sleeves. But, well, only related to treatment."

Arahnia clearly wanted to refuse. Of course, Glenn wasn't so inexperienced a doctor that he would let her get away with that. He always put every effort into curing his patients. That was his source of pride.

"To generate silk, you must have nutrient supplements. There are substances your body can synthesize, and substances it can't. The nutrients that can't be synthesized have to come from food."

"I'm a light eater..."

“I know. That’s why I brought you this.” Glenn took the straw bundle from Memé.

The food inside was called natto in the east. It was made from fermented soybeans, and was full of nutrients, although it didn’t keep long. Natto was especially rich in the proteins arachne required for generating silk. However, since it was fermented, it smelled somewhat rotten.

“Ugh...”

Arahnia plugged her nose. The natto’s unique smell grew stronger as Glenn opened the straw bundle and placed its contents on a plate.

“Ew. I’ll be outside.” Memé ran back through the shoji door to the courtyard. Glenn hoped she wouldn’t vomit.

“Ewww... Doc, isn’t there some other food I can try?”

“Nope.” Glenn stepped into the kitchen in the back. It was similar to the kitchen he grew up with, although he never really cooked at his parents’ house, either. It wasn’t as if he couldn’t make *anything*. He’d made Sapphee eggnog, and he knew how to make dishes for medical treatments.

“I don’t think you’ll be able to eat it like this, so I’ll prepare it for you,” Glenn called to Arahnia.

“Prepare?”

It was important to explain the details of meals to sick patients. If Arahnia ended up liking natto, she could start making it herself, which would help prevent her from developing Mourning Silk Syndrome again in the future.

“Oh, you have steamed rice. Perfect.”

“I like white rice.”

“That’s great. I’m going to start by chopping up green onions and enoki mushrooms. Oh, you have walnuts, too. I’ll grind some and put them in.”

“You’re very skilled...” Arahnia sounded dumbfounded.

Glenn just chuckled nervously. If only he could apply this skill to normal, everyday foods—Sapphee was always telling him that.

“Once I chop the ingredients, I’ll put them in the natto container.”

“Oh.”

There was nothing Glenn could do about the natto’s unique

smell, but he could make it somewhat easier to eat.

“Natto tastes better when eaten with other food, rather than straight out of the container. The nutrients don’t change, but mixing increases the umami flavor.”

The natto’s stickiness and stringiness increased, and it started to turn white. Glenn added more seasoning.

“After mixing, I’ll add a bit of olive oil.”

“You can put that in?”

“It will improve your blood flow and mitigate the kick of the natto flavor. You have fish sauce, too, so I’ll add a few drops. And... done!”

“I really want to eat your cooking, Doc, but...”

“It’s not exactly cooking, but go ahead and have some.”

Glenn put steamed rice into a bowl and piled the natto on top.

Arahnia sat up, taking the bowl from him. She narrowed her eyes in doubt, but lifted the chopsticks and took a bite.

“Mmm...”

The stringy substance stuck to the chopsticks as Arahnia brought them to her lips. She closed her eyes and rolled the natto around in her mouth.

“It’s...good.”

“Really? That’s great! Get lots of nutrients so you can recover quickly.”

“Mmm... I think I could even make this. Doc, thank you so much.”

If Arahnia had a high protein intake, the recovery time for Mourning Silk Syndrome would be far shorter.

“Doc, do you like this food?”

“Yes. I ate it often when I was growing up.”

“Hmm...”

Arahnia looked thoughtful as she pulled the natto strings apart with her chopsticks. Before Glenn could even ask what she was thinking, she popped a bite of natto into his mouth.

“Mmm?! Argh!”

“Doc, you have to chew and swallow.”

“Mmm. Arg...”

The natto had a subtle sweetness, and the olive oil reduced its strong smell perfectly. The onion and walnut textures accented the flavor as well. Glenn thought he had made a good combination.

But...

Those chopsticks had just been inside Arahnia's mouth.

"Teehee..." Arahnia flashed a bewitching smile. Her cute tongue licked the tips of the chopsticks Glenn had just eaten from. "I think I would get in big trouble if Sapphee knew about this..."

"Heh."

Glenn's face grew red. He and Arahnia hadn't touched lips directly, but it was similar. It was actually a bigger deal that their mouths had been connected for a moment by natto string.

"Teehee. Let's just keep it at this for today."

"Looks like you have *some* willpower, Arahnia, even though you're sick."

"Women are stronger than you give them credit for, Doc."

Glenn didn't have a comeback.

Memé, watching from the other side of the shoji door, muttered, "She's so mature..."

"Well then," Glenn said, "I'll just have to work harder so all the strong women around me don't overpower me."

"Ohh... Have I awoken a monster? I happen to love the weak you, Doc."

"Thank you. But this town is dangerous. There are things I need to do."

Glenn turned his attention back to the sleeping disease. It wasn't contagious, people didn't die from it, and it had no severe side effects...

However, it was serious.

One indirect effect of the Sheep Sleep was that Arahnia had worked herself into a seriously dangerous state. Even Memé's body would start to show signs of overwork if things kept up like this.

Glenn couldn't expose Lindworm's workers to any more danger.

"I want to become strong, too."

"I look forward to it." Arahnia laughed. "Oh, regarding that mouth-to-mouth feeding stunt... Let's not tell Sapphee. She's really scary when she's mad."

“Yes, I know.”

No matter how often she tried to play the bad girl, Arahnia just wasn't cut out for the role.

“U-umm, Arahnia?” Memé opened the shoji door.

“Hmm? What is it, Memé?”

“I've been meaning to ask... If you can't produce silk right now, then where did the silk on the loom come from? You didn't...”

“Oh, no. You're so sweet to think of that, Memé.” Arahnia smiled weakly.

As far as Glenn could tell, Arahnia's attitude was a bit different with Memé. Perhaps she felt some sort of empathy for the cyclops.

“The yarn on the loom isn't arachne silk.”

“So, where did you get it?”

“Arachne silk might be the highest quality material, but there are many others, like cotton and wool.”

Glenn suddenly understood.

There were monsters that produced wool, but if you excluded them... Since none of Lindworm's ranches had any sheep...

“No! From the tiny sheep?!”

“Bits of their wool are scattered everywhere. I made it into yarn. It's quite durable and easy to weave. Doc?”

“Wool... Sheep wool... But... No.” Glenn had the flash of an idea. He didn't want to let it get away.

The palm-sized sheep. Their bizarre appearance. The sleeping disease.

“What are you muttering about? It's creepy.”

“Memé, don't talk to the doctor like that. That's a very handsome look for him.”

Memé seemed confused.

“Teehee. I guess you're still a bit young, Memé. But I can tell a good man when I see one.” Arahnia chuckled to herself. It was an innocent, childlike laugh that no one ever would have expected from the “bad girl” Arahnia. Anyone would fall for her if she gave them that smile.

Unfortunately, Glenn was engrossed in his own thoughts, and didn't even notice. He left Arahnia's house and went home alone. Memé stayed to look after Arahnia.

On his way to the clinic, Glenn saw a tiny sheep walking alongside the road, swaying back and forth as if buffeted by the wind.

This was his chance to catch it.

“Okay.”

Glenn pulled a mask out of his medical bag and covered his mouth and nose. The moment he touched the fluffy sheep’s wool, though, his head got heavy, and he felt sleepy.

“Ugh.”

Somehow, despite his mask, the sleep-inducing powder had gotten into his body. Glenn stumbled back toward the clinic, dizzy with drowsiness. It was clearly the Sheep Sleep. If he hadn’t protected himself with the mask, he’d probably already be unconscious in the middle of the street.

“Oomph. Don’t run away now.”

The sheep fit perfectly in Glenn’s hand. It didn’t show any sign of wanting to run away, but it hopped around a lot. If Glenn didn’t hold on tight, the sheep might disappear into thin air.

“Let me take a look at you.”

Of course, the sheep didn’t answer. The only sound it made came from the mechanical movements of its four limbs. Still, Glenn was sure that this was an important piece of the puzzle for curing the sleeping disease. He arrived at the clinic feeling like he might pass out at any moment.

Case 04: Lindworm Asleep

Sapphente was dreaming about her childhood.

In the dream, she was sound asleep in an eastern-style mansion. She had a high fever and couldn't move. She wasn't in a bed, but a futon on tatami mats. It wasn't her home. She couldn't get used to it.

A young boy with black hair was by her side.

He was reading a book in a language she didn't understand.

"Hmmm... This isn't right, either... Well then, that one..."

His face was innocent.

Sapphee, foggy from her fever, couldn't do anything except stare at the boy.

"Brother! Suii caught a frog! Maybe it will help Sister get better!"

"It's just a myth that lamia eat frogs! Don't believe everything you hear!"

"What?!" Suii's voice was audible from the courtyard. It was even more childlike than the boy's.

Sapphee couldn't speak. She heard a sound like a sheep's bleat from far away.

"Okay! I got it." The boy closed the book. "I'm sure this will cure you, Sapphee."

Even though he was a young boy, he spoke like an adult. This was probably the first time he'd ever performed any type of medical care.

"Thank you... Glenn..."

A clear image suddenly pierced the haze of Sapphee's mind—a palm-sized sheep, the source of Lindworm's sleeping disease. The bleating grew louder.

"Get well soon, Sapphee."

"N-No... Umm..."

The sheep hopped up and down, making a sound like corn popping. It seemed to be growing. Sapphee tried to cry out, but her mouth was full of wool.

She was suffocating.

The sheep vanished as wool covered Sapphee's eyes. She tried to protest. She would have preferred a romantic dream...

"Mmmm-fa!"

Sapphee's eyes opened.

She realized she lay on a hospital bed. Her last memory was of the drinking contest with Sioux.

"What a dream..." Sapphee held her head.

How long had she been sleeping? The hospital room was dark, but something moved in the shadows.

"Dr. Glenn?" Sapphee reached for the curtain that separated the beds.

No lanterns were lit, even though it was night. The moving shadow began to take shape. It was a...sheep?

"Whoa, Silver!"

"Isn't Silver a horse?"

"So, what do you call a sheep?"

"It should be called Mary."

"Whoa, Mary!"

"Whoa!"

"What are you doing?"

Sapphee could make out multiple sheep now...and fairies. The fairies were lassoing the sheep, saddling them, and handling them like horses. The sheep didn't resist at all, just hopped around and played.

"Oh, no... There are sheep in the clinic!"

Was it a stroke of luck that Sapphee had woken up? She didn't know, but she couldn't let the source of an epidemic run rampant through the clinic.

"Where is Dr. Glenn?" Sapphee slithered off the bed and headed toward the examination room.

Using her thermal sense, she determined that heat was coming from the examination room—perhaps a lit lantern. She also felt a person's body heat nearby.

"Doctor?"

Sapphee immediately regretted opening the door. The room overflowed with tiny sheep. Not nearly as many as she had seen in her dream, but there were a lot. They ran past her, brushing her tail.

“Ahhhh!”

“Oh, Sapphee! You woke up. Watch your feet.”

“Doctor! What have I woken up to?!”

Sapphee caught sight of Glenn in the examination room, writing furiously at the desk, Sapphee’s research notes spread everywhere. Glenn didn’t look like himself, however. His bloodshot eyes drooped as if he hadn’t slept in days, and his pale face looked ghastly.

“D-Doctor?”

“The medicine worked. But I’m no good at mixing it. From now on, I’m leaving all the medicinal preparation to you, Sapphee.”

“Did you actually make it? The Sheep Sleep antidote?”

“Yes. But only enough for a few dozen people. I’m not capable of mass-producing the amount I need to treat everyone in town.” Glenn laughed out loud, somewhat hysterically.

It was only natural. He might have the knowledge, but creating medication was Sapphee’s forte. That was the whole reason she joined him in the first place. Cthulhy had determined that Glenn wasn’t cut out to make medicine. If Glenn had been able to concoct an antidote to cure Sapphee, however, he must have put in a lot of work.

“Doctor, have you been sleeping?”

“No... Actually, until I made the antidote, I was so sleepy I couldn’t stand it. But I thought that if I fell asleep, I wouldn’t be able to wake up...because of the sleeping disease.”

“D-Doctor, your arm.”

Glenn’s elbow was wrapped. Was it a cut? No...it must have been an injection site.

“Doctor, you didn’t experiment on yourself, did you...? Did you test the antidote before giving it to me?!”

“Er, uh, no. No, no. I was confident! And now I can see clearly.” Glenn laughed again.

Sapphee was angry, though. She didn’t understand how he could laugh about something like that. Medication became poison with the tiniest of mistakes. So many elements—like the size, age, and species of the patient—had to be considered. It wasn’t something that you figured out through trial and error, using yourself as a lab rat.

“You need to take better care of yourself! You were only just released from the hospital. Now you’re running drug tests on yourself?! If you keep this up, then I’m going to die of worry!”

“But aren’t you doing the same thing, Sapphee?” Glenn’s voice turned serious.

He was exhausted, but he hadn’t lost the twinkle in his eye.

“Me?”

“You knew that you might catch the sleeping disease, but you still went after the sheep, didn’t you?”

“B-but...that was necessary.”

“It was the same for me. I wasn’t acting recklessly or taking the situation lightly. I had the notes you took before you fell asleep, so I could make the medication.”

“Doctor...” Sapphee was speechless.

When had Glenn’s eyes become so confident and prepared? The young boy she’d seen in her dream had become a man without her realizing it. She’d always thought of her little brother as a troublemaker, but now, he could talk back to her.

She was glad.

If he had this much pride and self-respect, he could certainly beat the Sheep Sleep.

“That’s amazing, Glenn. You’re right. You did the right thing.”

“Oh, good. You understand.”

“Shut up! Just because you ended up being right, do you think I’m going to accept it? No way! These are completely different issues.”

Glenn had been correct, but that didn’t change the fact that he disregarded Sapphee’s concerns and acted recklessly. That behavior was just like Glenn, and it was his most dangerous trait. Sapphee stretched her tail toward him. Before he knew it, he was wrapped in her snake body’s embrace, although he still didn’t show any sign of leaving his desk.

“You! You! This is your punishment for constantly making me worry about you!”

“I-I was worried, too!” Glenn seemed determined to stand his ground. “I was afraid you might not wake up. Like that time when you caught a cold at the Litbeit house, or that time you were poisoned... Sapphee, I’m always worried about you. That’s why I wanted to make sure I saved you this time.”

“Er...”

“I have to fight, too.”

“Umm...” Sapphee loosened her grip and let Glenn go.

He'd far exceeded Sapphee's expectations as a doctor. But the young boy in her dream had possessed exactly the same passion for saving people. What could she do for him? It was obvious. She would be there for him as much as she could as his assistant, his sister, his pupil...and as a woman who loved him.

"Ah, I'm sorry," Glenn said.

"Don't apologize, or I'll squeeze you again! Now, what happened to this clinic?"

The examination room was completely filled with sheep.

"Well, I needed sheep to make the medicine, so I asked the fairies to catch some for me. But there are so many sheep throughout town that, before long, we were buried in them."

"You don't mean that the entire town is like this, do you?" If so, the sleeping disease must have completely incapacitated the rest of Lindworm's residents.

"Yes, well... It'll be faster if I show you."

"What?"

"I've been waiting for you to wake up. We have to start mass-producing the medicine."

So, that was the situation. Glenn woke Sapphee up first because she was a pharmacologist capable of making the antidote.

"I'll explain about the sheep while we walk."

Sapphee took a deep breath and followed Glenn outside.

Outside the clinic, it looked as though a snowstorm had hit Lindworm.

The "snow" was all tiny sheep. The flock filled the pastures and overflowed into the city.

"So many!"

"Yes. If I hadn't injected us with the antidote, we'd already have been struck with the sleeping disease again."

"B-but the townspeople... Aagh!"

It was nearly impossible to see through the sheep, but Sapphee spied a small beast with rabbit ears sleeping on the street in front of her. It was a young vorpal bunny girl. Sapphee remembered seeing her at the arena, so the bunny girl was probably a warrior.

“Oh, no! We have to pick her up.”

“I’ll take care of it. Hey!” Glenn waved his hands toward the darkness.

Two skeletons appeared at the end of the road. They held lanterns and walked forward, pushing aside the sheep.

“Over here! Please, pick her up.”

The two skeletons rattled their skulls, seeming to understand. They lifted the vorpall bunny and carried her away. On closer inspection, the pair was actually a zombie and a skeleton. A shadow wearing a dark cape also stood nearby. They were all rescuing townspeople who’d succumbed to the Sheep Sleep.

“With this many sheep, I would have thought that everyone in town had fallen asleep...” Glenn sounded emotional. “But I guess some people in this town never sleep.”

Sapphee understood. Both humans and monsters—all living beings, actually—required sleep. Some beings weren’t part of the living world, though. The undead had no need for sleep, and therefore, the Sheep Sleep didn’t affect them. Sapphee couldn’t remember ever seeing so many of Deadlich Graveyard City’s denizens within the town walls at once.

“It’s certainly useful in this kind of emergency. Come on, let’s go.”

A familiar figure appeared ahead, illuminated by blue light. A bewitched lantern floated in the air beside her, as if protecting her.

“It looks like you woke up, Dr. Sapphee.”

“Molly!”

“You look good. Does this mean you’ve completed the antidote, Dr. Glenn?”

“Yes, but we haven’t mass-produced it yet...”

Molly nodded.

The graveyard city’s manager tapped the ground with the shovel she held. At that signal, a number of skeletons emerged from the darkness, like a well-trained army.

“Molly, I thought you weren’t supposed to leave the graveyard city...”

“The stand-in representative, Aluloona, officially requested that Deadlich’s residents mount a rescue mission. The graveyard district is pleased to answer the City Council’s call for help. We have to look out for each other.”

“So, that’s why you came?”

“The undead will do whatever they want if you don’t watch them. They need direct instructions from a manager. Hey! You!” Molly yelled at the undead workers. “Push the sheep aside and make a path. These people are in charge of the Sheep Sleep medication.”

Click-click-click-click-click-click...

The skeletons and zombies picked up shovels and herded the sheep out of the way. Whenever they found sleeping town residents in the process, the undead carried them away to safety.

“Except for the hotel guests, all Deadlich residents are here on disaster relief duty.”

“Thank you so much for all the hard work, Molly.”

“Our goal is to improve the graveyard city’s reputation so that we can receive more funding from the City Council, and maybe even earn a seat or two on the council itself. If nothing else, with more funding, we could afford better flesh.”

Molly wiped her mouth, even though she wasn’t drooling. It was hard to tell if she was joking.

“Which way are you going?” she asked.

“To the entertainment district.”

“The entertainment district? Why?”

“Well...” Glenn wasn’t sure where to start. “Even though I made medicine to cure the sleeping disease—thanks to your notes, of course, Sapphee—we still have to figure out where these sheep come from.”

“I-I see.”

The medicine was just a bandage. If they didn’t remove the multiplying sheep, more and more people would fall to the sleeping disease.

“To put it simply, these are not normal sheep. They aren’t even normal mammals.”

“So...what are they?”

“They’re actually plants.”

“What? Plants?!”

Glenn plucked a sheep up by its fleece.

“They’re basically just seed clusters, like sunflowers, wrapped in wool.”

“Like dandelion fluff?”

“Exactly! The sheep’s ‘heads’ and ‘legs’ aid in those spontaneous hopping movements they make. In other words, they exist only to spread seeds over long distances.”

Like the alraune, who proliferated by mating with other monsters, the sheep had evolved to perpetuate their species.

“With seeds that can move on their own, the sheep plants can expand their habitat. Their fluffy wool is actually cotton, allowing them to move with the wind. If the wind is weak, they move using their limbs. They can even cross water by forming a group. Long ago, I saw a drawing in a picture book of trees that bore sheep. According to that book, wool and meat could be harvested from them. I thought it was just folklore, but now...”

“It’s called the Barometz tree.”

“That’s right. And the palm-sized sheep are actually Barometz seeds.”

The sleeping disease must also have developed through evolution. A single sheep would be no match for a predator, even with the ability to move on its own. Some plants addressed this by growing fruit that spread its seeds when eaten, but the Barometz tree hadn’t evolved in that direction. Instead, a sheep seed ensured its safety by putting anyone who touched it to sleep. Maybe “sleep” wasn’t even the right word for the state. Since the sleepers could still perform the necessary functions to live, “hypnosis” might have been a better description. In the end, however, that convoluted evolutionary process might have actually hindered the Barometz tree’s ability to proliferate—just like the gigas, who were too large and on the brink of extinction.

“But where in the world *are* the Barometz trees? Why haven’t we seen any?”

“Didn’t Aluloona say that someone was messing with the entertainment district’s flowerbeds?”

“Oh.”

Molly guided them to the entertainment district.

Like the rest of the town, it was full of tiny sheep. A line of patrol team soldiers, including the captain, stood around the flowerbed.

Aluloona greeted them. “Oh, you came?”

A number of male attendants from different species carried Aluloona’s bulb, like a parade float. After lowering her to the ground, they lined up behind her.

Molly addressed her. "You appear precisely as my records state: 'Aluloona Loona, stand-in City Council Representative, keeps a variety of men who work under her and sometimes tend to her at night.' Perhaps you're too concerned with pleasure for an administrator?"

"You must be the graveyard city's new manager. I heard that you use your predecessor's name. I don't appreciate the way you talk about how I live my life, but...let's put that aside. This is an emergency, and I am grateful for your help."

Aluloona's vines made an odd, squishy sound as she extended them to shake Molly's hand. Neither woman seemed to notice or care.

"So, what's this about Barometz?"

"Take a look at your flowerbed."

At first glance, nothing seemed amiss, but a closer look revealed white cotton sprouting from the soil.

"Barometz seeds germinate underground until it's safe for them to emerge. A whole network of flowers, vines, and leaves is probably hidden among the flowerbed's other plants."

"To think, they've been right in front of me this whole time..."

The patrol team began digging up the flowerbed. The orphanage kids and the entertainment district's working women helped as well, all wearing masks to keep them from inhaling the sleeping powder. They transferred the plants from the flowerbed into pots and carried them to a safe place.

"Everyone is treating the flowerbed very carefully." Aluloona smiled.

Sapphee smiled back. "That's because everyone likes you so much, Aluloona."

"Me?"

"Of course! You do everything you can to help others. As a pharmacologist, I respect that. I also happen to like you."

"Hmm. Are you coming on to me, young lady?" Aluloona tried to hide her obvious embarrassment.

The digging had gotten interesting. The ogre captain raised her hand to halt the work.

"Chief! There's a massive seed down here!"

"All right! Anyone who can't fight should go indoors! If you're drowsy, you can go to sleep now. There are tons of beds here!"

The flowerbed began to shake, and the patrol team took a few

steps back.

A massive white cotton ball—the size of an elephant, at least—emerged from the flowerbed, shaking off dirt. It opened its mouth toward the heavens and roared.

“Th-this is a seed, too?!”

“It’s probably the true seed. I never thought it would be this huge, though. The tiny sheep were likely born from this one.”

As Glenn looked closer, he could make out tiny vines and flowers all along the Barometz.

“It’s so big. There’s no way those vines are providing it enough nutrients. Wait...”

“Hmph.” Aluloona snorted. “You think someone is trying to create turmoil in this city?”

“Sapphee, remember when I asked for fertilizer to use in the gardens?”

“Y-yes. Wait... No way!”

“At some point, it was stolen from the garden...”

“Would you manage things better?!” Sapphee grabbed Aluloona’s vines and squeezed hard. The flower on Aluloona’s head shrank a bit, and she looked guilty.

The patrol team stood face to face with the Barometz as it hurled tiny sheep toward them, one after another. The soldiers were used to chaotic fights, but they had no idea how to attack this foe.

“There’s a limit to the protection a mask provides.”

“A long battle will put us at a disadvantage.”

“Yeah.” Aluloona nodded at Glenn’s words.

Just then, a palm-sized sheep struck one patrol team member, a cat sith, in the face. The cat fell asleep instantly, curling up kitty-style, even though she was in the middle of a battle. A group of skeletons and zombies carried her to a safe place. As the battle continued, the patrol kept losing members.

“Hey, Molly!” Aluloona called. “The undead should fight, too!”

“I already ordered the skeletons and others with combat experience to fight. But wouldn’t it be easier to burn this thing?”

“Hell no! If we do that, the entertainment district will become a sea of flames.” Aluloona’s voice was anxious.

“I don’t have an alternative plan.”

“We’re stuck... Glenn, do you have any ideas?”

“I can’t think of anything. What can we do to fight it off?”

“We could try cutting the flowers off its back. If we sneak up on it quickly, that might be possible.”

“Sneak quickly? That means...”

Glenn could only think of one person for the job. Someone very close to him.

“Where’s Sioux?”

“I am here!”

Glenn heard a voice behind him.

When he turned around, he saw his younger sister, horns and all, dressed in foreign clothes. She held two male humans in her arms. They were unconscious and wrapped in sheets.

“Aluloona! Just as you ordered, I caught the insolent guys causing a ruckus in the flowerbeds!”

“Oh! You’re quick for a rookie!”

“I used to be a guard!”

Sioux dropped the two men on the ground as if they were luggage. Since they were unconscious, they showed no signs of protest.

“So, these are the ones who planted the Barometz in the flowerbed, then took the fertilizer from the garden to make it grow faster than normal.”

“B-but...why in the world?”

“I don’t know. But bandits aren’t usually educated about rare plants. Someone must be pulling their strings.”

They’d have to question the bandits later. Sapphee held the two men with her tail so they couldn’t run away when they came to.

“You’re here just in time, Sioux.”

“That big Barrow-metsu thing? Leave it to me!”

“Don’t be too hasty,” Glenn said.

Sioux drew her sword. Now that Memé had polished it, the blade shone in the moonlight. Still...something wasn’t right about the whole scene. Sioux wasn’t showing any signs of fever, even though she must have exerted great strength to catch the bandits. Had she taken them down without a fight?

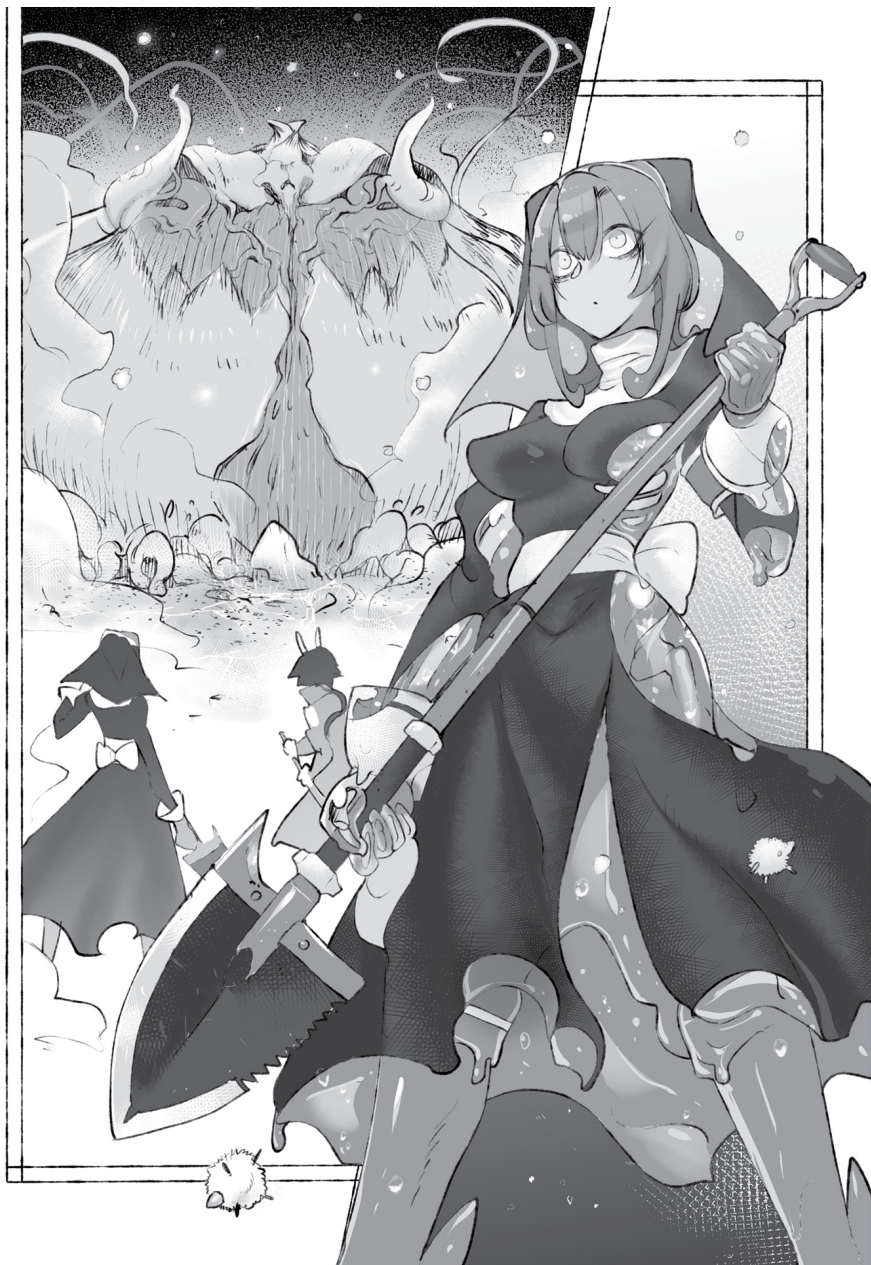
“Dr. Glenn, who is this girl with horns?” Molly asked, seeing

Sioux for the first time.

“Oh, that’s my sister. Her name is Sioux. She just moved here.”

Molly nodded. “Sister, registered. Body scan complete. Ideal strength. Expected to get one hit on the Barometz. Success rate, 82%. We should implement a strategy to increase her chances.”

With a sudden metallic sound, the blade of Molly’s shovel transformed into something like a scythe. Molly spun it around.



“Sister Sioux, we will flick away these seeds. Avoid the palm-sized sheep and take down the Barometz.”

“Who is this ill-looking person? A walking corpse?”

“I am Molly, the Graveyard City’s manager. More importantly, I desire to be Dr. Glenn’s lover. Please, allow me to call you sister.”

“All the powerful people here want to be with my brother.” Sioux sounded disgusted.

Glenn wanted to bury his face in his hands. What was Molly talking about, desiring to be his lover? Sapphee’s glare could have pierced Molly’s heart...if she had one.

“Miss Aluloona! Sioux is going ahead!”

“You can do it!”

Before Glenn knew what was happening, Sioux yelled and launched herself at the massive sheep, but...

“Huh?”

She couldn’t run. Her feet dragged. Still, she pushed forward, slowly and diligently.

Molly reached the Barometz first, blasting away the tiny sheep it kept spitting. She hacked at its branches with her scythe.

Sioux still couldn’t run. Glenn noticed that her eyes were closed. But she pressed on toward the Barometz anyway.

“Umph!”

The Barometz popped mini-sheep out of its wool like popcorn, but Molly batted them away easily. She didn’t have to worry about contracting the sleeping disease, so it didn’t matter to her how much powder floated in the air.

She was doing a pretty good job of protecting Sioux from the barrage of sheep flying toward them, when...

“Sorry. I missed two,” Molly stated matter-of-factly.

“Duck, Sioux!” Sapphee screamed.

Sioux tilted her head to one side, avoiding the sheep seeds with the bare minimum of movement.

“Can she see? Her eyes are closed!”

It was a strange sight.

Sioux easily dodged the sheep seeds the Barometz shot repeatedly. She would cock her head, lift her leg, or tilt her body a little, like a well-trained martial arts master. She didn’t waste an

ounce of movement, avoiding every single sheep by the narrowest margin.

But why? Sioux was a mighty fighter. She could have easily smashed the sheep to bits.

“Oh, I see!” exclaimed Glenn.

“Doctor?”

“Sioux is fighting without overheating.”

Glenn finally understood. Intense exercise would normally give the demon Sioux a fever, so she was moving her body as little as possible to evade the enemy’s attacks. When had she become so crafty? She must have been training while Glenn was busy researching the sleeping disease.

The massive sheep lifted its chin to the sky. What was it trying to do?

Just then, Glenn noticed something strange about the tiny sheep that he’d completely missed.

Why do they have heads? For decoration? That doesn’t make sense. Their feet move, so what are their heads for?

It came to him suddenly.

“Everyone, plug your ears.”

“What?”

“Now!”

As Glenn yelled, the massive sheep opened its mouth.

“OOOOOOOOOOHH-AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHH!”

The sheep uttered a high-pitched scream, and a huge cotton ball flew into the air. Glenn and most of the others covered their ears in time, but the patrol team soldiers who hadn’t all collapsed.

“Wh-what is that?”

“Sound waves! They’re directing the sleeping powder at specific targets!”

The Barometz moved like an animal, but it didn’t seem to have a brain or consciousness. Like certain plants, it apparently reacted to external stimulation. The smaller sheep probably reacted the same way, which made sense, considering their hopping movements. When their legs came in contact with the ground, they responded by releasing sound waves that made them jump. Glenn had never heard of such a thing before.

“We’ve been defeated. We should have been prepared for this.

Pathetic.”

Molly, close to the noise, had reverted to slime, her bones scattering everywhere. It probably wouldn't take her too long to form again, but during a battle like this, every second counted.

“Where is Sioux?!”

Glenn looked for his sister. She must have heard his instructions, since she was plugging her ears. However, she hadn't stopped walking, and had already reached the Barometz.

“Sioux! We're counting on you!” Glenn yelled.

Sioux nodded vigorously.

Sioux knew everything.

She could sense the direction of the airflow around her and detect where things moved. She had her eyes closed, but she could see the world.

The secret was her horns.

Through those sharp and sensitive organs, Sioux knew the world around her.

She already had the training. While learning martial arts, she acquired the ability to detect the presence of others. Now she sensed what most humans felt on their skin through her horns. They became another set of eyes through which Sioux saw her surroundings.

A sheep seed flew toward her. She leaned slightly to avoid it.

Sioux could shut out unnecessary information far more easily with her horns than with her eyes. It was a peculiar sense, and she only had it because of her Demonitis.

That was why she came to Lindworm. That, and her secret orders. Being a demon was nothing special here. Everyone had a different appearance.

Beyond that, Aluloona and the ogre captain had treated her well. For the first time since she'd grown horns, Sioux was grateful for her demon body, and for the ancestors who passed down the genes.

I...

Sioux let her thoughts wander as she dodged the Barometz's attacks.

I am a newcomer. But I love this city. Aluloona, the captain, Sister,

Memé, Arahnia, and, of course, Brother. They are all here. It is a great place to live.

Unlike her brother, Sioux wasn't good at studying, or even sitting still for long periods of time. If she didn't move, her demon strength would probably burst out of her. Now that she was a part of the entertainment district patrol team, however, that wasn't an issue. Her job was to restore order. She might work differently than her brother did at the clinic, but she still helped people.

I will protect this city!

The Barometz lifted its head again, preparing to scream. Sioux wasn't going to let it perform the same attack twice, though.

She opened her eyes and kicked off from the ground, flying into the air with a superhuman jump that launched her all the way to the Barometz's far side, thanks to her demon strength. On the Barometz's back was a single white flower.

"Yaaaaahhh!"

Sioux sliced the flower off. The Barometz swayed, then toppled over. Sioux landed in the flowerbed, the blossom she'd cut off fluttering down after her.

The Barometz didn't scream. Instead, it turned into a palm-sized sheep that wandered away.

"Sioux!"

Her brother ran toward her. Sioux sheathed her sword and turned to him.

Everyone smiled. Thanks to Sioux's training—her devotion to the sword, both before and after becoming a demon—she'd defeated the Barometz.

Sioux let out a deep breath, content at the thought of saving people, just like her brother.

The breath was like lightning.

Her horns felt as though they were being ripped off.

"Ugh! Ow?!"

Glenn said something, but she couldn't make it out. She held her head.

"Uggh... Ahhh!"

Sioux's scream, unbecoming of a martial arts master, conveyed just how much pain she was in.

Sioux held her head and collapsed.

As Glenn approached his sister, he tried to think calmly, falling back on his training as a physician.

What happened?

The first possibility was that Sioux had been hit by a counterattack from the Barometz. But she had dodged the sheep flying toward her and guarded herself against the sound waves. It was unlikely that she was injured.

Another possibility was the Sheep Sleep, but that didn't seem right, either. Sioux was holding her head and screaming. She definitely wasn't asleep.

"Oww... B-Brother!"

"Sioux! Are you okay? Can you talk?"

"M-my head! My head hurrtrts!"

"Your head?"

Glenn examined Sioux's head. The culprit seemed to be her horns. Their tips were dark red.

"It's subcutaneous bleeding..."

"Owwwww!"

"It's okay, Sioux! Just...try to stay calm. Sapphee! Painkillers!"

The pharmacologist responded right away. "Here you are." She handed Glenn a bottle filled with slightly cloudy liquid.

"Thank you! Sioux, this is going to feel a bit cold." Glenn rubbed the medicine on Sioux's horns. Her skin absorbed the thick liquid.

"Ohh..."

Glenn continued to examine Sioux's horns as he rubbed. The tips were bleeding inside. But what was the cause? It could be a bruise, or perhaps the horns had cracked... But she hadn't suffered any blows that would cause something like that. Glenn looked even closer and discovered that the skin *around* the horns was bleeding.

"What is it?"

Aluloona and Molly—who had reappeared—approached, sensing something unusual.

"Is she hurt?"

"Negative. Sioux suffered no damage in battle. Dr. Glenn, please

explain.”

Glenn nodded. Sioux still looked as though she was in pain, but thanks to the painkiller, she was no longer flailing.

“I think her horns are trying to protrude through the skin.”

“What?”

“It’s only a hypothesis. But when demons are children, their skin protects their horns. As a demon grows, the horns slowly protrude, exposing the bone matter. Perhaps Sioux’s horns have grown large enough, even though her skin isn’t ready to peel off yet.”

That wouldn’t normally be a problem if the demon’s skin softened as the horns grew. However, Sioux’s skin wasn’t ready to be stretched, so it was bleeding—and probably coagulating—inside. It had to be painful.

“Perhaps the sudden exercise exacerbated the bleeding.”

Sioux had said that her horns felt sensitive. It was possible that the pain was especially strong because of its location.

“Doctor, what’s the treatment? Painkillers? Or even...removing her horns?”

Sioux shook at Sapphee’s words. Since the horns were the source of her pain, removing them was a valid treatment. Sometimes, removing the horns of livestock improved their temperament. But cow horns, for example, had veins and nerves running through them. Removing them meant more bleeding and more pain. Plus, the wounds had to be cauterized with a hot iron to stop the bleeding. Sioux had seen it back home.

“No...” Sioux mumbled.

Glenn shook his head. He stroked Sioux’s hair to help her feel better. “We will only remove your horns if there is no other choice.”

“Th-then...”

Glenn didn’t hesitate. “I’m going to remove the skin. No surgery necessary.”

Sioux’s horns had simply grown too quickly. Helping them grow properly would be better than removing them.

“Miss Aluloona, there will be some bleeding. Is there a large space around here where we can use water?”

“The bathhouse. It has the latest equipment.”

In times like these, Glenn was grateful that Lindworm’s canal system supplied the town with fresh water.

“I will treat any injured patrol team members in the bathhouse! If you can get there on your own, please do.”

Luckily, there were no serious injuries. Sioux was the most severe case.

“She saved the entertainment district—no, she saved Lindworm. Take good care of her, Glenn,” Aluloona called.

“Of course. Even if she wasn’t my sister, I would.”

“Good.”

Sioux whimpered in his arms.

Her pain seemed severe, but she hadn’t lost the fire in her eyes. Glenn followed Sapphee and Molly, carrying his sister to the bathhouse. His own strength surprised him. Perhaps it was just adrenaline—or perhaps, even though he didn’t have horns, demon blood really did run through his veins, too.

Glenn removed Sioux’s armor, and everything else that he thought might get in the way of her treatment. He laid a cloth on the bathhouse floor and sat Sioux on it. Sapphee held her from behind.

Glenn knelt, facing Sioux.

“Doctor, the fairies and the graveyard city residents brought your tools from the clinic.”

“Thank you. And those with minor injuries?”

“They’re treating themselves.”

The patrol team members were taking out wrappings and disinfectant as needed. Molly also helped with the first aid. Seeing the way she moved without hesitation, Glenn wondered if she had prior first-aid experience.

He shook his head. Right now, the priority was Sioux.

“Doctor...I’ve never cut horn skin before.”

“It’s easy. First, disinfect the area.”

Luckily, there was a lot of clean water in the bathhouse. Glenn put Sapphee’s handmade topical medication in a pitcher and mixed it with water, checking its sticky texture with his fingers. Then he applied it to Sioux’s horns.

“Mmm... Uggh... Ahh.”

Sioux’s eyebrows twitched.

Glenn slathered the medication generously from Sioux's horn tips all the way to her forehead to minimize her pain. The gooey liquid stuck to her skin easily; some of it dribbled down to her nose. Sioux's eyes were closed against the pain, so she didn't even notice.

As Glenn continued rubbing, Sioux's skin softened, the surface absorbing moisture and becoming supple.

"How are you doing, Sioux? Does it still hurt?"

"Mmm! I-It hurts a little, but...not very much."

"I see. I'll rub it in a bit longer."

Glenn poured on more medicine. In addition to stopping pain, the ointment also eliminated friction, to aid in removing the skin.

"Mmm! Ahh!"

"Sorry. It might hurt a little."

"Mm! Ahh! U-understood..."

Glenn's hands moved quickly. The treatment seemed to work well. Sioux's expression was distant, perhaps from the medication's effects. Hopefully, her pain was now almost nonexistent.

"Sioux, I'm going to go faster."

"Huh—ahh! Haa! Mmm!"

Sioux's body arched.

It was a bit worrisome, but Sapphee held her shoulders with both arms, wrapping her tail loosely around Sioux's legs.

Glenn sped up, putting more force into the motions.

"If I keep this up, the skin will come off eventually."

"It's like molting."

"Yes, well, it's close."

Sioux's horns were starting to peel.

Glenn decided that touching both horns at once might be too much for Sioux to bear, so he concentrated on rubbing just her right horn. As her skin absorbed the medicated lotion, he poured more from the pitcher.

Sioux looked as though she was in a trance, possibly a side effect of the painkiller. Sapphee whispered gently to her. She probably couldn't actually sleep while they worked on her horns, but it would be better for her if they finished the procedure while she was in a dreamlike state.

"We're almost there..." Sioux's skin was stretching. Glenn

grasped her horn harder.



“Mmmmaaa!” Sioux squealed.

The sound of skin tearing filled the bathhouse, and suddenly, the sharp tip of Sioux’s horn poked through.

“The skin’s peeling. I’m going to help it along.”

Now it was time to be gentle.

Glenn slowly peeled the skin off Sioux’s horn, as carefully as if it were a hard-boiled egg. There was some bleeding, but not much. If the horn had grown just a bit slower, the skin would have come off naturally, without pain.

Her horn was probably extra-sensitive. Glenn tried his best to avoid touching it, pulling the skin off with a delicate touch. He worked slowly from the horn’s tip down to its base, brushing aside Sioux’s bangs and applying lotion as needed.

“Okay, now for the final step. Don’t move, Sioux.”

After removing most of the skin, Glenn signaled to the fairies for his scalpel. There were still pieces at the bottom of the horn. Glenn quickly ran his scalpel around the base, so no marks would be left behind.

“Ooohh... Ahhh... Ahh... Haa...”

Sioux exhaled and snuggled up to Sapphee.

“I-It is done?”

“No, I still need to do the left horn.”

“Ohhh...”

Glenn wiped the blood and the medicated lotion off Sioux’s right horn. It shone white, like ivory.

Mammal horns varied, depending on the species. Some grew over a lifetime, and others regrew every year. He wondered what kind Sioux’s would be. Blood vessels and nerves ran through them, so he thought they might be similar to bovine horns. They’d matured under the skin, though, which resembled deer antlers.

Either way, Sioux’s progress would need to be monitored.

“Okay then, let’s continue.”

“Ahhh, ahh.”

Glenn touched Sioux’s left horn. It was essentially the same. After applying a generous amount of medicated lotion, he started massaging it in. Sioux squeezed her knees together, as if looking for an outlet for the stimulation.

Eventually, her left horn also broke the skin, and Sioux’s high-

pitched scream echoed through the bathhouse. Molly and the patrol team looked to see what was wrong.

Glenn was proud of his sister. When Skadi came back from her business trip, he hoped she would honor Sioux with an award ceremony.

He continued peeling the rest of the skin away until there were two sparkling horns on Sioux's forehead.

"Ahhh. Oh, haaa..."

Sioux's shoulders heaved. There were tears in her eyes—whether from the pain or the treatment, it wasn't clear.

"You're all done, Sioux. You did great."

"I-It was nothing..."

She was trying to act strong, but she remained lying down, looking as if she might fall asleep. Sapphee stroked Sioux's head.

"Dr. Glenn, are you finished?"

"Oh, yes."

At some point, Molly had arrived at Glenn's side.

"Aluloona has asked you to come to her once you examine the other patrol team members."

"That's fine, but why?"

"The bandits messing with the flowerbed were interrogated. Aluloona wants you to hear something."

"Then I will prepare..."

Interrogation often went hand in hand with physical injury. Aluloona was doing what she needed to protect the city, but as a doctor, Glenn felt that even criminals deserved proper medical treatment... Although these ones had brought the Barometz into the town.

"You won't need any medical supplies. It's Aluloona. I doubt she used violence."

"Oh..."

Glenn remembered how effective Aluloona's pollen could be. Especially on men.

"Will it be snakes or demons?" he muttered.

"Well, there's one of each over there." Molly pointed at Sapphee and Sioux, who had fallen asleep.

"Oh, no. It's just a saying in the east. It means there's no telling

what will happen, but it won't be good."

"I see. New phrase registered. Snakes or demons. Use and pronunciation perfected. In addition to the mainland's common tongue, I am learning regional dialects."

Molly nodded repeatedly with an unchanging expression.

Now that Glenn had defeated the Sheep Sleep, his work as a doctor was done. Once Sapphee mass-produced the antidote, the city residents would start to wake up.

But the City Council's work was just beginning.

What kind of person would smuggle in a plant that made the entire city fall asleep? Whether snakes, demons, or sheep trees, Glenn was sure Lindworm would accept them.

He chuckled.

His sister, the demon girl the city had welcomed, was sound asleep, using Sapphee's body as a pillow.

Interlude: Brother in the East

Souen Litbeit was bored.

In the office, his superior glared at him. Souen had been his secretary for years. Today, the man was in the worst mood since Souen started working for him.

“Souen.”

“Yes, Your Excellency?”

“That horned girl hasn’t gone home yet. It’s been days. I can’t stand that her scales are tainting our house.”

“Your Excellency, the Draconess is staying here to expand trade with us. She won’t leave without your approval. If you go against the other Statesmen’s opinions, then you—”

“What a joke. Trading with western beasts.”

Souen’s superior, Duke Auchraw, was a stout, middle-aged man. He was one of the elder statesman who served as advisors to the emperor of the human regions.

Souen was a merchant and would one day succeed his father as master of the Litbeit house. He already did business with the western monsters through Lindworm. When it came to trade, monsters had many strengths. The lamia were skilled at creating medicine, the arachne made silk and clothing, and the cyclops made blades and steel goods. They were all supported by the centaurs, who provided much more reliable transport than humans, and by the harpies, who flew through the air delivering letters and small packages.

Now wasn’t the time to refuse to trade with monsters. They were necessary to develop the human regions further.

“Souen, what is the horned woman doing?”

“Eating breakfast, as you instructed.”

“Good. I’ll make her suffer.”

Duke Auchraw, a typical human supremacist, hated the monsters’ mere presence in the senate. He planned to pay the Draconess a visit as she ate breakfast, but that was a terrible idea. Did Auchraw really think he could control a dragon just by mixing a little arsenic into her food? He clearly knew nothing about monsters.

“I will join you.”

Souen knew the Duke was all talk. In the end, he was a courtier, and a coward to boot. Even so, Souen wouldn't dare to go against his wishes.

He sighed in his heart so the Duke couldn't hear him.

The Draconess was small, like a child.

"Good morning, Duke. It's a pleasure to see you so early."

Appearances could be deceiving, though. The Draconess, Skadi Dragenfelt, might look like a little girl, but she was quite powerful. Right now, she was in the middle of a luxurious breakfast. She filled her mouth with steak as she spoke to the Duke.

Duke Auchraw sat across from her with clammy hands. The whole affair disgusted Souen. If Duke Auchraw *did* manage to poison the Draconess, it would be an international issue. Arsenic, however, couldn't kill a dragon in the first place. Souen's brother had told him it had something to do with the metal inside dragons' bodies.

"How is your breakfast?" the Duke asked, smirking.

"It's delicious! There's arsenic mixed in. It's a famous seasoning among us dragons. How did you know? Kunai, would you like some?"

"Yes, please!"

Skadi's guard also ate the steak without flinching.

Kunai's pale skin was a patchwork of flesh. She clearly wasn't of the living. Poison would be useless on her, too.

"You've saved me the trouble of coming to see you, Duke. Will you sign the new trade agreement? All the other elder statesmen have signed."

The agreement—a formal convention to expand trade between the east and west—was inscribed on sheepskin. For the eastern merchants, it would mean access to more goods, and would stimulate the economy. Charging duty on goods passing through Lindworm would benefit the west as well.

"Oh, Miss Draconess. Of course I want to sign, but according to Souen here, the tariff is too high. It won't allow us any profit."

This was a huge lie.

Souen had calculated that the trade agreement was an opportunity to profit hugely. It was why the other statesmen signed. Souen had told the Duke that, but the Duke called him a pathetic

merchant who only cared about making money.

The last part was true.

“I see.”

Souen thought the Draconess would persist, but instead, she accepted the agreement. She finished eating and wiped her mouth.

“Let’s leave that topic for now.”

“Did you have another topic in mind?”

“Yes. This morning, I received a letter from Lindworm. Yesterday, a rare Barometz tree, also known as a ‘sheep tree,’ was found growing in the entertainment district. That tree’s seeds, shaped like sheep, overran the entire city, putting my citizens to sleep. Thankfully, the people I left in charge were able to avoid catastrophe.”

The Duke’s expression didn’t change. “And?”

“Bandits from the human regions brought the Barometz to Lindworm. They admitted that they were under Duke Auchraw’s orders to cause confusion in the city.”

“Hahaha! Oh, Miss Draconess. Do you really believe the words of bandits? It’s common for criminals to name someone—anyone—with power when trying to shift blame.”

“True. But why would mere bandits want to cause chaos in Lindworm? The Barometz tree sounds more like the work of someone who wanted to chase out a certain dragon they saw as an obstruction. Of course, that is only my suspicion.”

The patchwork guard stifled a laugh.

Duke Auchraw’s face didn’t show it, but he was clearly humiliated.

The Duke *had* arranged the Barometz tree. He purchased it through third parties so that it couldn’t be traced back to him. Of course, however, the Duke’s subordinates had hired and paid the bandits.

“Never mind that,” said the Draconess. “Let’s talk about something else.”

“There’s more?” The Duke, ready to finish this conversation, looked bored again.

“Yes. Actually, this is what I really wanted to talk about. Duke, you were dealing harpy eggs, correct?”

“What?” His startled reaction was unbecoming of a statesman.

Souen clicked his tongue.

“Harpy...what?”

“Harpy eggs. A better way to put it would be...illegally trafficking the harpy species, then selling the eggs to aristocrats in the human regions. If you have a rebuttal, I’d be happy to hear it.”

“Uhhh... Uhhh...”

Skadi stared into the Duke’s blue eyes, completely detached. There was no encouragement or discouragement in her expression. Her gaze was that of a god contemplating a mere mortal. Perhaps she had already decided the Duke’s sentence. All that was left was to drop the gavel.

The Draconess lived in a realm beyond humans’ reach. The earthly Duke Auchraw was no match for her.

“What are you talking about...? Harpy eggs? Why would anyone sell those?”

“I don’t know their use. I just know that I have an eye on the aristocrats who purchased them, and the chefs who cooked them. There are people with unusual tastes everywhere in the world.” Skadi narrowed her eyes.

“You’re making false accusations.”

“My accusations are based on information from former slave traders now hiding in Lindworm. They repented of their sins and are helping the City Council patrol. They are reliable.”

“It’s outrageous that you would believe such despicable beings!”

“I would be happy to go to the eggs’ buyers and ask them myself. Even if you hired mercenaries for procurement, I know you were directly involved with the sales. Otherwise, no one would have believed they were real harpy eggs.”

The Duke glanced at Souen as if asking him to do something—or perhaps he was considering how to shift the blame. Either way, Souen didn’t have much choice.

He flipped back his long black hair.

“With all due respect, Miss Draconess...”

“What?”

“I am Souen, the Duke’s secretary. I am also on the Eastern Merchant Union’s board of directors. I can assure you that there are no records of such illegal goods.”

“I know that. The Duke sold the harpy eggs through his personal associates. If he used public markets, it would have been too easy to trace.”

It seemed she'd done her research.

Souen shrugged.

The patchwork guard showed the Duke several documents. Souen didn't need to look at them. He knew they contained decisive evidence.

"Did you really say they were like bird eggs?" the patchwork guard said. "That's vile."

The Duke's face flushed with anger.

"Guards!"

Senate guards rushed into the dining room. For a fleeting moment, they reminded Souen of his sister, who used to be such a guard.

"This horned woman has slandered the elder statesmen with false accusations!" Duke Auchraw bellowed. "Arrest her immediately!"

Skadi didn't flinch.

The guards moved as soon as the Duke barked his orders. However, they pointed their spears at the Duke himself.

Auchraw sputtered, trying to figure out what was going on. "Wh-what are you doing?! I-I'm an elder statesman! I'm a Duke!"

"Former Duke," Souen responded.

This was Souen's last day of service. Even if he were to take a new position with another elder statesmen tomorrow, he felt relieved knowing that he no longer had to work under this ill-tempered man.

"Dealing harpy eggs directly violates treaties with the monster regions. We will have to investigate this further."

"Souen, was it you who betrayed me?"

"Betrayed? You seem to misunderstand something, former Duke," Souen scoffed. "I am a merchant. I act based on profit and loss. It was far more profitable for me to side with the horned woman than with you. Nothing more."

The guards forced the deposed Duke toward the door with their spear tips. Auchraw was still shouting as he disappeared from sight.

"I'm sorry for the commotion," Souen said.

"I wish you'd picked a better time to entrap the Duke," Skadi replied. "I was trying to enjoy my breakfast."

"I was stuck listening to him, too! If it's any consolation, I brought you some jelly desserts."

“Desserts...” Skadi’s eyes shone.



The dragon girl the eastern regions feared really did look just like a child.

Skadi and Souen had been in contact for a long time.

At first, they worked together to enrich trade between the east and west. At some point, though, Souen realized that Duke Auchraw was trading in harpy eggs and decided to oust him from power.

“Wasn’t he your superior?” asked the patchwork guard, who seemed to have a strong sense of loyalty.

“I weighed the pros and cons. A merchant watches how the scale tips. That’s all.”

The truth was that Auchraw had participated in illegal trafficking. He’d all but said that he wanted another massive war with the monsters. For those reasons alone, he deserved punishment. Souen merely took the initiative to sell him out. He didn’t want to be blamed later for something he had nothing to do with.

Of course, as a defensive measure to avoid getting caught up in the affair, Souen had refrained from participating in the harpy egg dealing. At most, he’d given tacit consent.

“It’s fine, Kunai.”

The jelly desserts were cooled white mochi balls with molasses on top. They were rare, even in the human regions. Skadi smacked her lips, made “Mmmm!” noises, and flapped her wings, making it clear how much she enjoyed the sweets.

“If you’re purely motivated by profit, you can be trusted,” Skadi said. “The problem arises when you let other things influence your decisions. The Duke dealt in harpy eggs, but that was based on his hatred of monsters.”

This was true.

The Duke had lost private property in a previous war. It was unfortunate, but it didn’t justify capturing harpies and forcing them to lay eggs.

“But...why?”

“Why what?” asked Souen.

“The Duke probably arranged the Barometz crisis in Lindworm as well. Once your sister got Demonitis, she was relieved of her position as a senate guard—or at least, you made it look that way—

and you sent her after the Barometz tree. Isn't that right?"

"You knew that, too?" Letters really did travel quickly by harpy.

"Why didn't you just ask Dr. Glenn, since he's already in Lindworm? Why did you need to give Sioux a secret mission?"

"The truth is...I'm not a great big brother. It's also true that Sioux left on her own."

Skadi cocked her head, confused.

Souen searched for the right words.

"I told her there was a chance that the Duke's minions might be causing a commotion in Lindworm. However, she left before I had a chance to finish the whole story. I don't think she even knew that the Barometz tree spread the sleeping disease."

"Still, Aluloona's letter said that it was all resolved without issue."

"Yes, but it was touch-and-go for a bit. If the Duke had realized what I was up to, it all would have been for naught."

"Is that why you wrote the letter to Dr. Glenn?"

"Harpy delivery is extremely fast and convenient." Souen chewed his lip. "There is one more issue regarding Glenn... But it's strictly confidential. I can't even tell my family."

"What is it?"

"I'm sorry, but I'd rather not discuss such personal matters."

"Hmm."

Skadi didn't really seem interested. Souen realized she'd been staring in another direction the entire time.

"Was it the Duke who made your sister leave?"

Souen flinched at Skadi's words.

"When Sioux was human, the Duke liked her so much that he gave her a famous sword," Skadi continued. "That's why you started working for him, too. But the second your sister started growing horns, the Duke probably changed his tune. Did that make you feel angry, and want to overthrow him?"

"I'm just an ambitious businessman. I have to eliminate the people in my way if I want to be on top."

"I see. Well then, I look forward to working with you. I'll be careful not to be eliminated." Skadi chuckled, although her eyes weren't laughing.

Expanded trade between east and west would benefit both sides. As a merchant, Souen was in a position to maximize his profits, and of course, he wanted to do business with Skadi. However, he knew that if he displeased her, he would end up just like Duke Auchraw.

“We are but humble humans. Please don’t abandon us, Dragon Goddess.”

“Don’t call me such things. I am not divine. I live how I want to live.” Skadi licked syrup off her spoon. “And I will always root for my residents’ success. Lindworm accepts all who come there.”

“I’m sorry?”

“You should think about your siblings. More jelly, please.”

She pushed her empty glass forward.

Souen couldn’t help but laugh. He hadn’t actually thought this great dragon could be bought with sweets. But she was serious.

“If the Draconess requests a bribe, I am not in a position to refuse. I will prepare enough for everyone in your party.”

“Yes, please. Speaking of which, where is Cthulhy?”

“The sea doctor is in the hot springs.”

“Kunai, go get her. Once she’s boiled, chop her up and make takoyaki.”

The Draconess’s guard swiftly left the room. Souen didn’t actually believe that Skadi would chop up her companion, but he couldn’t tell from her expression whether she was joking.

“Thank you for all your help.” Souen bowed his head.

As a merchant—or as a politician, he supposed—Souen spent his days amidst lies and schemes, but in that moment, his bow was genuine.

“Delicious.”

He didn’t know if Skadi was listening.

She was eating her second helping of dessert and flapping her wings.

Epilogue: Baby Sister's Secret Orders

The curtain had closed on the entertainment district's Barometz issue.

The rogue tree was gone, but the palm-sized sheep that were its seeds remained here and there throughout Lindworm. Aluloona had decided to plant them around the city.

Aluloona Plantation was a lifeline for Lindworm, providing food for all the city's residents. Its owner gazed out over the vast fields spread across the town's south side, nodding her approval.

"They were planted well," Aluloona said.

"You've worked so hard, and done a great job, Miss Aluloona." Glenn agreed.

The Barometz seeds had burrowed into the ridge. There must have been a hundred or so. Aluloona wondered when they would bud.

"The Barometz tree affected a wide area, but at least there were no casualties. According to Skadi's letter, Duke Auchraw of the human regions was the mastermind behind it. But she took care of him."

"I'm sorry for what my fellow humans did."

"Everyone is different. You can't assume that someone is bad or good based on whether they are human."

Across the plantation, minotaurs and similar monsters worked the fields, in addition to alraune like Aluloona. The plantation was an important source of jobs in Lindworm. Many residents worked there during the peak seasons.

"Luckily, I had extra land. And the sheep burrow into the ground when they find good soil. It will take years, but they will bud, bloom, and make trees, and then sheep will grow from the ground again." Aluloona spoke of the trees as if they were her own children.

It was hard to believe that this was the same person who used pollen to try and seduce Glenn. Aluloona had many different faces.

"And then the sleeping disease will take over again...?"

"No, the fertilizer caused that. There likely won't ever be that many sleepy sheep again. And if we keep researching them, we might even develop medications based on the trees' unique properties."

"When Cthulhy comes back, I'll have to speak to her. I have high

expectations for you, young doctor.”

“Y-yes.”

Hearing that made Glenn nervous.

“Even though Sioux had to cut it off, the Barometz flower was quite beautiful. But I suppose that, in time, we’ll get to see it again.”

“That is a really sweet thought, Miss Aluloona.”

“Hmph.”

The flower growing on the side of Aluloona’s head opened and spread pollen. Plant monsters did that when they were embarrassed.

“Sweet... Pff. Who do you think you are speaking to?! I am Aluloona, and I’ve had my share of men, both human and monster! Don’t treat me like a silly girl!”

“I don’t know what to say when you brag about men.”

“Hmph! You’re so brazen!”

“I-I just said what I thought.”

“Shut up!”

Glenn didn’t know what she was angry about.

Aluloona had closed all her flower petals, and she was in bulb form, just like when he’d first met her. She must have felt really embarrassed.

“I didn’t plant these new Barometz trees on a whim, you know. I thought it through.” Aluloona spoke through her bulb.

“I know.”

Arahnia suddenly came swooping in on her silk. Even though her body was huge, she was very light. She looked like some sort of phantom.

“Here, Miss Aluloona. I caught some tiny sheep.”

“Oh! Give them to the workers over there.”

“Will do!” Arahnia heaved the sheep over to the alraune workers passing by, as if the seeds were toys. “When you spin the wool from these sheep into yarn, it’s incredibly durable. I’ve decided I want to buy it from you for Loose Silk Sewing.”

“An exclusive contract. It will cost you, of course.”

“I know, Miss Aluloona, but it’s worth it. I need to think about what to do if my seamstresses can’t produce silk. Barometz yarn is at least worth researching as an alternative.”

“It’s perfect for both of us!”

The two bewitching monsters giggled.

Whenever Aluloona and Arahnia got together, they looked as though they were hatching some evil scheme, but their conversations were almost always innocent. Finding an effective use for the Barometz plants would be good for the city. Plus, if there were more sources for high quality yarn, it would lower the risk of any arachne coming down with Mourning Silk Syndrome.

“I just realized, Doc. I didn’t thank you for treating me, did I?”

“Huh? You paid me...”

“That’s not enough at all! How about I knit you a scarf? It will be ready in time for the cold.”

“I would be really grateful, but...”

Arahnia giggled, flashing a genuine smile.

Perhaps it was Glenn’s imagination, but it seemed as if Arahnia had matured even more since he treated her. He suddenly worried that it was all a trick, that she’d caught him in her web. When he looked around, though, he couldn’t find a single thread.

Besides, he knew that Sapphee was watching them from afar. As soon as she’d gotten to the plantation, she started sorting the herbs the workers gave her. Even from this distance, though, Glenn could see the daggers in her eyes.

“What is it, Doc?” asked Arahnia. “You didn’t tell Sapphee what happened when she was sleeping, did you?”

“Umm... N-not yet.”

“Then it’s just our little secret.”

“N-no! I’ll tell her...later.”

“Heh. I can’t wait.”

What did Arahnia mean by that?

Glenn knew he should tell Sapphee that Arahnia had cooked him food while she was asleep, at the very least. He could feel Sapphee’s eyes still on him, however. He decided to wait just a little longer, until things settled down, before he told her.

“Ooof! Aggh!”

Sioux Litbeit appeared on the plantation, striding toward them.

Glenn’s sister had faked running away from home to fulfill their brother Souen’s secret orders. She’d also infiltrated the patrol team to follow the Duke’s lackeys, although she hadn’t known that they were

using the Barometz to spread the sleeping disease. Still, in the end, Sioux took down the Barometz, doing a fine job of fulfilling her duties.

“I am sorry to be late. I was making new patrol clothes.”

“What are you doing here, Sioux?”

“Hee hee! Sister called me. Is that a problem?”

Sioux’s patrol team uniform was dyed red. She had been recognized for defeating the Barometz, and a dyed uniform was a common promotion for skilled patrol team members. The vermilion uniform suited her well.

Glenn noticed that Sioux didn’t have her sword on her hip. It was probably being polished. Again.

“Are your horns okay?”

“Yes! They don’t hurt at all. And the sensitivity is good, too! But, Brother, it seems like they’re still growing...”

“Probably because we peeled the skin away. Not much is written about demons, but it’s possible the horns will grow for your whole life.”

“Will they hurt again?” Sioux flinched, perhaps recalling her treatment a few days prior.

“We already tore the skin, so I think it will be okay now. The horns can grow to a certain length without affecting your daily life. If we need to, we can file down the tips, but that shouldn’t hurt.”

“Ohhh... Why am I the only one who grew horns?”

“Well...”

Sapphee had snuck up behind them. She hugged Sioux, wrapping her lower body around her.

“S-Sister, what are you...?”

“Let me tell you something. When a living being has horns, it’s usually a sign of power and strength. In other words, they make you sexy.”

“Whaaaat?! ”

“If your horns keep growing, that means you have strong desires that aren’t being fulfilled.”

The conversation’s biological turn flustered Sioux. Her face grew so red, it looked like it might burst into flames.

“Th-that is not true! You are making me sound dirty...”

“Well, they’re only legends, but horned monsters like ogres and

minotaurs say the same thing. There's no debating that longer horns are more appealing. Horns also mean that your body contains excessive nutrients."

Glenn smiled awkwardly. Sioux's face grew even redder.

"Sister! Just because you are sexually frustrated does not mean you should take it out on me!"

"Who's sexually frustrated?"

Sapphee tightened her lock on Sioux's body. She was probably holding back, but Glenn had to imagine that her grip was still painful.

"Agggghh!"

"Sioux, I don't care about your sexual desires. But you better cough up some answers soon."

"Ugh... I am about to cough up my lunch!"

"That's not what I'm talking about. Tell me why you ran away. You never gave me an answer when we were drinking that night."

"I-It was on Souen's orders..."

"I know Souen told you to catch the troublemakers who smuggled in the Barometz, and caused all the pandemonium. But wouldn't it have been better if Glenn and I helped you from the beginning? Why did you change the spelling of your name? Why didn't you trust us?"

"Ohhh..." Sioux looked as though she was trying to escape Sapphee's tail. If she struggled too much, though, she would probably overheat.

"If you're going to continue living in Lindworm, then you shouldn't hide things from your siblings."

"I-I know."

Sapphee stroked Sioux's horns with her finger.

"N-no, not the horns."

"C'mon, out with it."

"A-actually, the subject of Brother came up when I was talking with our family about coming here..."

"Huh? me?" said Glenn.

"About when you are going to get married."

Sapphee froze.

Married? Glenn hadn't expected that, either. What did marriage have to do with Sioux sneaking into Lindworm?

“I told Mother I would secretly see what was happening. I also had orders from Souen, of course, but...”

“W-wait a minute,” stammered Glenn. “I cut all ties with the family, so what’s this about marriage?”

“They know that you are running a clinic in Lindworm with Sister. I said I would check and see if you had any intimate partners.”

Sapphee was still frozen. Sioux had freed herself from the lamia’s tail, and now turned her gaze to Arahnia, Aluloona, and the graveyard city in the distance.

“It seems you have many relations with women.”

“N-no, that’s not true.”

While Glenn protested, Sapphee glared at him.

“It is true! How many relationships do you have with women?” Sapphee demanded. “I can’t even count them.”

“You misunderstand!”

“Well then, when I was sleeping, what did you do with Arahnia?”

“She just made me dinner. How did you know that?!”

“We work in the same clinic! I can tell when dishes and foods are moved!”

Arahnia did everything she could to stifle her laughter. She’d known something like this would happen.

“I am disappointed in you, Brother. I thought you were loyal to Sister,” said Sioux.

“Nothing happened...”

“Shh! No excuses! I cannot report your condition to our parents!”

Glenn sensed that he should tread carefully. He cowered as Sapphee and his little sister glared at him. He hadn’t done anything bad. He only did his job, working to cure Lindworm’s citizens. For some reason, though, he was being blamed for this, too.

“There is nothing for me to do but find you a suitable wife, Brother.”

“What are you talking about?”

Sapphee glowered at Glenn without even a hint of a smile. Arahnia’s ears perked up as well.

Glenn was so busy running the clinic that he had no intention of

getting married anytime soon. However, Sioux was serious. He buried his face in his hands, perplexed by his sister's statement.

With no regard for anything Glenn might be feeling, a palm-sized sheep appeared out of nowhere and dug itself into the soil at his feet, as if it had decided that it was the best spot.

Despite the plantation's peaceful scenery, a host of problems seemed to await Glenn.

Afterword

Hello, everyone. I am Yoshino Origuchi.

I apologize for the long delay between Volumes 4 and 5. Volume 5's plot progressed slowly. First, I was going to have Glenn visit his childhood home, and tell Sioux's Demonitis story there. Partway through, though, it got boring, so I changed it to what you have here.

After that, it came together well, if I do say so myself.

You may have noticed that all the named women in this book are monster girls. Glenn's sister is no exception. I somehow made sure she was also a monster girl (or a demon girl).

What did you think?

I tried to incorporate a few challenging elements into this volume.

First, I worked in the fictional diseases Demonitis, Mourning Silk Syndrome, and Sheep Sleep. The idea of the Barometz spreading the sleeping disease is unique to *Monster Girl Doctor*.

The *Monster Girl Doctor* series has always been clean, but now, we've finally seen the story stray from that. There are certainly "unclean" things happening day and night in the entertainment district. Miss Aluloona embodied these aspects. The illustrations might suggest otherwise, but please rest assured that these are all medical examinations.

At some point, the world changed. Lately, dragon girls and demon girls like Vtuber are all the rage. As a monster girl fan, I'm very pleased. I'd like to enjoy monster girls in every possible way.

I now want to express my gratitude.

To my editor, Hibi-u-san, thank you. We've finished Volume 5, and Hibi-u never says, "Mon-musu! Mon-musu!" Instead, he always seems upset. Maybe it's about time to become a *Monster Girl* fan? Please?

Also, Z-ton-sensei, thank you for your wonderful illustrations. There would be no *Mon-musu* without Z-ton-sensei's artwork. In fact, whenever I look at new illustrations of Arahnia, I fall in love all over again. That arachne girl sure is cute. Volume 5's cover is the third time I fell in love with her. I'm not sure what it means for me to fall in

love with my own characters, but it's all Z-ton-sensei's fault.

Thank you so much.

Also, thanks to Thomas Kanemaki for handling the manga transition!

You always turn my work into wonderful manga. Whether you're tracing lines, working on the background, separating panels, or focusing on character actions, you keep the spirit of the original work and pay attention to every detail. I am so lucky to work with you.

As I write this, I'm not sure what stage this volume is at, but it's possible that it will be out very soon. Please look forward to it.

Also, thank you to my author friends; the manga artists and illustrators who tweet at me; S-BOW and the staff running "Non-human Only"; all of Japan's bookstores; *Comic Ryu's* manager and editors; my family, whom I can't see often, because I moved out; and the proofreaders who always point out the little things.

Most of all, thank *you* for reading.

There will be much turmoil in Volume 6.

Glenn might also reach a crossroads in his life.

Please look forward to it.

—Yoshino Origuchi

About the Author, Yoshino Origuchi

I finally got a plant monster into the series.

It's getting harder and harder to keep the plot "clean."

I mean, this volume is set in an entertainment district.

Big cities come with sex establishments. I researched that very carefully.

It's not like I want to make monster girls sexy—oh, wait. Yes, I do.

About the Illustrator, Z-ton

Although I keep saying I'm trying to limit my portions, I've been eating slightly undercooked brown rice with seaweed "furikake" seasoning sprinkled on top. I've tried every wasabi furikake flavor, and they're all great.

(I wonder if Lindworm has furikake...?)



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